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GAME NEWS

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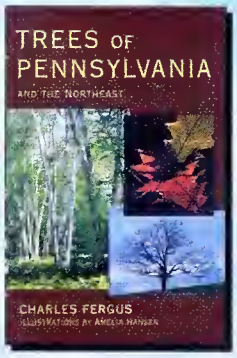
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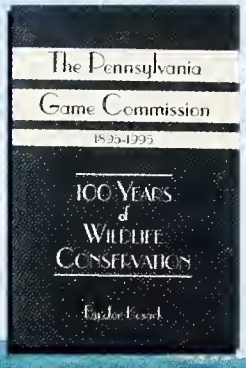
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PGC Books



Trees of Pennsylvania and the Northeast, *by Chuck Fergus is a handbook for identifying 60 species of trees, complete with illustrations and narratives, 320 pages.*
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Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, *by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.*
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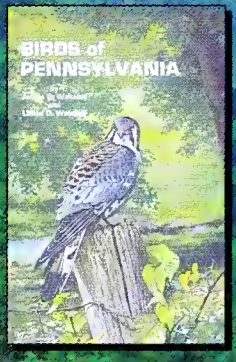


Gone for the Day is a compilation of Game News columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.
Price: $5.66

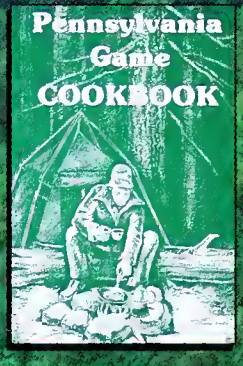




Thornapples, *by Chuck Fergus is a new collection of favorites from this popular* Game News *columnist, 272 pages.*
Price: $16.95

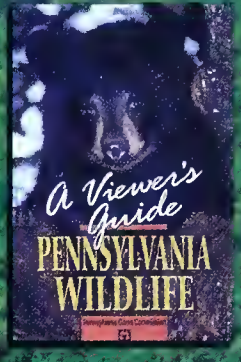


Birds of Pennsylvania, *a 214-page hardcover by James and Lillian Wakeley, details birds most commonly found here, plus information on their biology and behavior.*
Price: $12.26



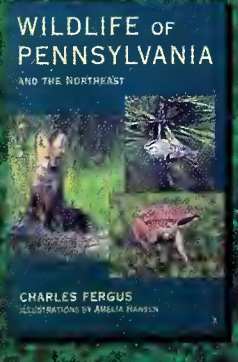
Pennsylvania Game Cookbook *is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.*
Price: $4.71

Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, *by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.*
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Price: $19.95

PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make check or money order (no cash, please) payable to and order from: Pennsylvania Game Commission Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or call 1-888-888-3459; Visa, Discover, MasterCard and American Express accepted.

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Game News goes full color

IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED ALREADY, *Game News* has gone full color. And after just celebrating our 75th anniversary, it's hard to imagine a better way to kick off our 76th year.

For a dozen or so years now, we've been using desktop publishing software to layout the magazine, and with our computers connected to a color printer, we've long been able to see what *Game News* would look like with our photos and artwork in full color. Making such a change, however, has been only a dream, until now.

For several reasons, most notably because the costs of printing in full color have dropped substantially, we can now make this change — and at no additional cost to you.

We're sure you're going to find *Game News* much more attractive. Being January, this issue features the Game Commission's annual report, and this year's report includes many full color photographs, and color pie charts, too, depicting the agency's basic sources of revenue and expenditures. (Note that the pie charts for fiscal year 2002-03 are on page 34. Last year we were unable to include a financial report with the 2002-03 annual report.)

Look over the back half of the magazine and you'll see color photos accompanying most of our columns, and some most attractive Gerry Putt artwork complementing Marcia Bonta's column.

We have no intention of eliminating black-and-white art entirely. But in upcoming issues we'll be working to use color as best we can to, ultimately, best promote hunting and trapping and wildlife — and to make *Game News* the best it can be.

This month, check out the following annual report. Sure, it's dry and not the most exciting or entertaining thing to read, but it is important. It covers the agency's extremely wide range of responsibilities and accomplishments. Spend a little time with this report, and you'll see that our license fees are an outstanding bargain. — *Bob Mitchell*



Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report, 2003-04

NOW that last year's specter of a merger has lifted, the Pennsylvania Game Commission can go about a more positive legislative agenda and refocus our efforts on better serving our customers — the license buyers.

Since October of 2000, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has been selling its hunting and furtaking licenses through "The Outdoor Shop" on its website (**www.pgc.state.pa.us**). We did this to improve customer service, especially in this day

and age when time seems to always be of the essence. However, even though we have improved the customer-friendly nature of our Internet license sales system, the "hard copy" system that most hunters and trappers use at their local issuing agent is the same, time-consuming process of filling in the forms. I've often said that our license sale system might be the only thing keeping the carbon copy paper people in business, because technology has long since passed them by. Hopefully, the Game Commission will soon take a big step forward into the 21st century when it comes to selling licenses.

When the 2005-06 Legislative Session convenes, the Game Commission will be seeking support for a proposal to increase the cost of an antlerless deer license by $2, beginning with the 2005-06 license year. If enacted, we will use that money to create and implement a "point-of-sale" system. What exactly will this mean to the average hunter?

With a point-of-sale system in place, hunters will be able to swipe their driver's license through a magnetic reader and all of their personal information will be filled in on the application automatically. Hunters then will be able to select the licenses and stamps they want to purchase. After the first time a hunter purchases a license this way, he or she will be assigned a permanent license number that will be stored in an electronic file so in subsequent years they will need to only enter changes in the types of licenses or stamps wanted.

What will this mean for the average license issuing agent? First, by having a system that audits while they work, they won't need to tie up so much of their money in bonds to secure the licenses they need to serve their customers. Their bond will, most likely, only need to cover the costs of the computer system.

What will such a system mean to the Game Commission? Besides fulfilling our goal of making the agency and its programs more user-friendly, we will finally, after all of these years, have a computer database of all of our license buyers. Such a database will enable the agency to conduct more surveys of our license buyers on a regular basis. We will no longer need to pay to have the names, addresses and telephone numbers data-entered. We also can prevent people from purchasing more than one license per year, and we can prevent people who have had their hunting or trapping privileges revoked from purchasing a license.

Combined with two other proposed bills that the Game Commission is supporting, we will be able to begin to significantly reduce our license issuing and harvest reporting costs while improving services to license buyers and the data that we use to establish seasons and bag limits.

The first of these companion bills would remove the requirement that hunters and furtakers display their license on the back. This would enable us, through the point of sale system, to eliminate the current heavy-stock license cards purchased and replace them with a wallet size card. Also, coupled with point-of-sale, this measure will enable the agency to link the license purchasing system with its disabled person permit and crossbow permit systems so that hunters would no longer need to keep track of separate permits, as this information could be printed on their license — similar to how a driver's license indicates whether a driver needs to wear glasses or contact lenses.

The second of the companion bills, House Bill 2326, removes the requirement that hunters mail in their big game harvest report cards and enable us to establish an on-line reporting system and/or a toll-free telephone reporting system. This bill was approved unanimously by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor.

If the Legislature enacts the other two measures it will certainly help the Game Commission's wildlife management programs and its services for license buyers.

Wildlife Management

2003-04

The basic goal of our wildlife management program is to manage for healthy, functional wildlife populations that are socially acceptable to Pennsylvanians and their communities. We survey and monitor wildlife populations. We study the relationships between wildlife, habitat and humans and their communities. We develop and implement management plans. We apply the management tools of hunting, trapping, habitat management, enforcement, communications and education to achieve a balance between biological and social acceptability.

GOAL: Maintain and improve wildlife populations for consumptive and non-consumptive recreational use and their many public values, and protect and enhance our hunting and trapping heritage.

To better manage sustainable wildlife populations, a new Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) system was implemented in 2003-04. These new units were designed to replace the specific units used to manage bears, beaver, deer, furbearers, pheasants, quail and turkeys. WMUs were developed using highways and rivers for boundaries and are based on wildlife populations, harvests and other ecological factors.

The agency's use of reporting rates to estimate deer harvests was independently reviewed and found to be a scientifically acceptable method for estimating harvests. A report on the review was submitted to the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

In April 2004, the third and final year of captures for the Antlered Deer Study was completed. Since its inception in December 2001, we captured 2,016 deer and radio-instrumented 550 bucks, constituting one of the largest radio-telemetry dispersal and survival studies ever conducted in North America. As of the end of this fiscal year, about 250 radio-tagged bucks were still being monitored. Though no additional deer will be captured, radio-instrumented bucks will continue to be monitored for movements and survival through January 2006.

This study has provided evidence that antler restrictions are increasing buck survival. Historically, hunters have taken about 80 percent of our bucks; since 2002, however, when antler restrictions went into effect, only about 50 percent of our bucks have been taken. Another indication that bucks are living longer is the number of juvenile (button) bucks caught per every adult buck. In the spring of 2002, before antler restrictions, about 14 juvenile bucks were captured for every adult buck. In 2003 this dropped to nine juveniles per adult, and in 2004, two juveniles per adult.



Due to antler restrictions bucks are definitely surviving longer now in Pennsylvania. JOE STANTON arrowed this mature trophy buck in Allegheny County.

Over the past five years we have ini-



Luzerne County WCO THOMAS SWIECH demonstrates the agency's processing procedures for bears in front of this group of students.

tiated a variety of studies, including a fawn survival study, a conception study to define when the rut and birthing periods occur, and an antler measurement study to determine what antler restrictions are necessary in various WMUs to provide the best buck harvest results. To learn more about these studies, visit the PGC website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

During 2003-04, hunters recorded the fourth highest deer harvest in state history, including the second highest antlerless deer harvest. Hunters harvested 464,890 deer, 322,620 antlerless and 142,270 antlered.

For the 2004-05 hunting seasons, 1,039,000 antlerless licenses were allocated, 66,000 more than for 2003-04. This allocation is intended to reduce the statewide deer population by approximately five percent.

In 2003-04 the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) was approved, to provide an additional tool for managing deer. Specifically, DMAP is designed to allow both public and private landowners to better control deer numbers on their properties. Landowners who met eligibility criteria received DMAP coupons, which were in turn distributed to hunters. Upon receiving DMAP coupons from participating landowners, hunters purchased DMAP antlerless harvest permits from the Commission allowing them to harvest an antlerless deer on the applicant's DMAP property.

DMAP licenses are valid during any open deer season, and hunters are bound by all regulations in place for the open seasons.

For 2003-04, the Commission received 203 DMAP applications and approved 176. Overall, 696,309 acres were enrolled with properties ranging from 21 acres to 73,575 acres. Eighty-two percent (572,818) of the acres enrolled were public lands.

There were 31,783 DMAP coupons approved and provided to qualifying landowners and of those coupons, hunters redeemed 23,348. With all DMAP harvest permit holders required to submit a report card, a total of 6,242 deer were reported.

DMAP was revised in April 2004 for the 2004-05 hunting year. Some of the initial restrictions were removed, allowing more land to qualify. For 2004-05, eligible DMAP lands were defined as public lands; private lands where no fee is charged for hunting; and private hunting clubs established prior to January 1, 2000, that own 1,000 or more contiguous acres. Coupons for DMAP harvest permits continue to be issued to landowners at a rate of one coupon for every five acres in agricultural operations and one for every 50 acres for all other land types. A landowner may qualify for additional coupons by submitting a deer management plan.

As with the first year, landowners are permitted to distribute only one DMAP coupon per hunter, who may then redeem the coupon for a DMAP harvest permit ($6 for residents, $26 for nonresidents) through application to the Commission. Hunters are allowed to possess only one DMAP permit per specific DMAP area in any given license year.

In 2003, hunters took 2,851 bears, (18 percent of the population) during the state-

2003-04

wide season, and 149 during the extended season in WMU 3D, bringing the total harvest in WMU 3D to 413 bears.

Similar to past years, almost equal numbers of male and female bears were harvested. Based on data collected at check stations, adult male bears averaged 252 pounds, and adult females averaged 179. However, 17 bears weighed more than 600 pounds, three of which exceeded 800 pounds. The largest, 864 pounds, was a state record. The average age of harvested bears was 2.3 years.

Bear license sales reached a record level in 2003, numbering 123,911 compared to 122,046 in 2002. While bear license sales had been slowly increasing since 1999, the large increase during the past two years is probably due to the extension of the season into the first week of firearms deer season, in the northeast.

Since 1980 the number of bears here has been estimated by ear-tagging during summer months and noting the proportion harvested in the fall. In 2003, 625 bears were captured, tagged and released and the following harvest data indicated there were 16,102 bears here in 2003. Population estimates for the past four years have been relatively stable, averaging 15,171 bears, although the 2003 estimate was the largest on record.

A rising trend in nuisance bear conflicts continues to be a concern. In the spring of 2003, a regulation prohibiting the feeding of bears went into effect. This regulation was due to expire in October 2004, but the Board voted in July to make the regulation permanent. A new database for recording nuisance bear conflicts was implemented in early 2003, and for the third consecutive year, an extended season was approved, for 2004, in the northeast. A draft bear management plan also was completed.

Wild turkey populations are known to be resilient, and this year they proved it. With two years of harsh winters and limited food supplies, coupled with two years of cold, wet springs, the statewide population this spring of 341,800 was lower than the last few years, which included the record of nearly 410,000 turkeys in 2001. Numbers rebounded this fall, however, thanks to a good 2004 breeding season and abundant fall food. Because both male and female turkeys may be taken in the fall, maintaining conservative fall hunting seasons helps to keep populations from declining. For this reason, the fall 2004 season was reduced from three weeks to two in WMUs 4A, 4B and 4D, and the season remained closed in WMU 5A and 5B.

Preliminary spring 2004 harvest figures indicate the harvest was 41,000 bearded birds. This was six percent lower than the 2003 harvest, and five percent below the previous 10-year average (43,260). Spring turkey harvests continue to increase and have exceeded fall harvests for the last three years.

According to our Game-Take Survey the total 2003 turkey harvest was 73,976, 6 percent below the 2002 total of 78,493

Dave Mitchell



Preliminary spring 2004 harvest figures indicate the harvest was 41,000 bearded birds. RENEE MITCHELL, Fogelsville, bagged this 21-pound bird with a 10-inch beard in Lehigh County last spring.

and 24 percent below the 2001 record harvest of 97,194, but only 3 percent below the previous 10-year average. We expected the 2003 harvest to be down, due to the below average recruitment and fall mast crop, which reduced the fall harvest. Even so, the 2003 total harvest was the seventh largest on record.

With spring harvests exceeding fall harvests, the long held tradition of fall turkey hunting has been overtaken by spring gobbler hunting, as the number of spring turkey hunters surpassed fall turkey hunters in 2003 for the fourth consecutive year (246,821 versus 211,965). Hunter success (17.4 percent) was slightly above the previous 10-year average (16 percent). Spring hunter success ranged from 10.1 percent in WMU 2C, to 31.6 percent in WMU 5C.

Fall 2003 harvest was 31,100, 17 percent below the 2002 fall harvest of 37,346, and 17 percent below the previous 10-year average of 39,707. Hunter success (15 percent) was 12 percent below the previous 10-year average (17 percent). Fall hunter success ranged from five percent in WMU 4B to 26 percent in WMU 3C.

From our research study in WMU 5A we concluded that sub-adult mortality is likely one limiting factor for the turkey population there. Therefore, beginning in 2003, we closed the fall hunting season there, to restore this population. Also, a cooperative project was started with local orchard owners to reduce accidental rodenticide poisoning. Additionally, we are monitoring broods in WMU 5A to determine what habitats they use and, in turn, if habitat management practices can enhance brood survival.

The first revision of the "Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Pennsylvania" was initiated in 2004, with completion anticipated in early 2005. This plan, which directs the goals and objectives for turkey population management and research on a 5-year basis, was developed cooperatively with various interest groups.

The estimated number of grouse hunters, like those for most small game, dropped 10 percent in 2003-04, and the days of participation dropped 3 percent. Take per hunter-day dropped 7 percent, reflecting the decrease in the grouse population. Harvest estimates showed that 134,000 hunters took 106,000 birds.

Several hundred grouse hunters help us monitor grouse population trends by keeping track of their time afield. In 2003-04, cooperators recorded 7,500 hours of hunting and a statewide average grouse-flushing rate of 1.05 flushes per hour, down from 1.17 in 2002-03. This rate is also well below the previous 38-year average of 1.45 and essentially matched the previous lowest rate of 1.04 flushes per hour in 1976. Flushing rates decreased in all six regions, reflecting the drop in grouse numbers throughout the state.

Grouse on the Scotia habitat management study area on SGL 176 in Centre County have been monitored since 1976 to measure population responses to a 2.5-acre patch cutting program setup on a 40-year rotation. The population on the study area also dropped in 2004, for the second successive year, paralleling statewide trends. Recent results show that the managed area continues to carry almost 2½ times the number of drumming males, more grouse than the unmanaged area. The highest density of drumming males in 2004 was one for every 19 acres, found in 15- to18- year-old patches, cut during 1985-88.

On this habitat management study area we have learned that drummers do not use areas for the first five to seven years after cutting, and that it may take 12 or more years before the full potential of a cutting is realized. What we have yet to learn is how long the beneficial effects of cutting will last, which is important for making habitat recommendations to landowners interested in grouse management.

Squirrels remain a top quarry for hunters, ranking third in number of participants in 2003-04. Almost 200,000 hunters spent 1.1 million days afield, bagging more than one

million squirrels. Bushytails ranked number two in harvest for all game species, with only woodchucks being taken in larger numbers. Recent surveys showed that fox squirrels are expanding their range, and consequently have become a popular quest for squirrel hunters. With the aging of Penn's Woods (larger trees, more mast production, more tree cavities), the outlook for squirrel hunting is bright.

In 2004, 216 square kilometer plots were surveyed for waterfowl breeding pairs, to assess the status of waterfowl populations. The number of mallard pairs was estimated at 84,806, compared to the 1993-2003 average of 101,178. For only the second time in 16 years, no black ducks were found on survey plots, although black duck densities have been low since the survey was initiated in 1989. For wood ducks, 47,368 pairs were estimated, which is similar to the 1993-2003 average, reflecting a relatively stable trend in wood duck pairs.

The 2004 Canada goose population estimate of 299,000 was a record. As expected, the highest densities were observed in the southeast (6.18 geese/km^2) and northwest (4.97 pairs/km^2). As with goose numbers, 2004's number of breeding pairs, 122,857, was also a record. Pairs were most abundant in the southeast (2.12 pairs/km^2) and northwest (1.91 pairs/km^2).

The annual Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey (MWS) was conducted from fixed winged aircraft and on foot during mid-January. The number of waterfowl observed (68,914) was 26 percent lower than in 2003, but six percent higher than the 1994-2003 average. This total included 6,616 dabbling ducks (mostly mallards and black ducks); 606 diving ducks (mostly scaup, buffleheads and goldeneyes); 764 mergansers; 59,634 geese (81 percent of which were Canada geese); and 1,294 swans (97 percent of which were tundra swans). We implemented a voice recording/GPS system in the survey aircraft, which will allow all future observations of waterfowl during the MWS to be geo-referenced and incorporated into a GIS database.

Preseason duck banding continued in cooperation with the Atlantic Flyway duck banding program. Banding information is essential to determining the timing and distribution of duck survival, harvest, harvest rates and migration patterns, and allows evaluation of hunting regulations. In 2004, 2,610 ducks were banded, including 1,723 mallards, 31 black ducks, 805 wood ducks, 24 blue-winged teal, 14 green-winged teal and a lesser number of other species.

During June 2004, a record 3,372 geese were banded, 842 adult males, 795 adult females, 810 juvenile males and 925 juvenile females. This is six percent above last year's 3,174 and exceeded our quota by 28 percent.

Subsequent recoveries of banded geese by hunters allow us to refine and evaluate resident goose seasons. These data, along with legband recoveries and morphological measurements of harvested birds, are used to determine the proportion of migrant

Hal Korber



THE 100 HUNTERS awarded licenses in 2003 — selected in a public drawing — took 68 elk, 18 antlered and 50 antlerless.

geese in the harvest and to aid in developing proposals to expand hunting opportunities here.

Research on the Eastern Population (EP) of tundra swans is continuing in cooperation with Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. So far, more than 1,800 tundra swans have been equipped with transmitters and coded neck collars.

The annual mourning dove call-count survey, conducted in cooperation with the USFWS, indicated no change in mourning dove populations from 2003 to 2004, or over the past 10 years.

Pennsylvania is one of 27 states participating in a 3-year (2003-05) mourning dove banding project, designed to provide estimates of survival, harvest and band reporting rates, as well as information on migration patterns and geographical harvest distribution. This information is needed to provide better management. Banding was conducted in July and August at about 50 sites in 20 counties. Preliminary statewide banding totals were 901 juveniles, 660 adults and 73 of unknown age. The 1,634 doves banded in 2004 were a four percent increase from 1,569 in 2003.

Of the Pennsylvania-banded doves recovered, 92 percent were recovered by hunters in Pennsylvania. Other Pennsylvania-banded doves were recovered in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Alabama. The results from the first two years of the study indicate we can band a sufficient number of doves to obtain reliable harvest rates, and, in turn, better manage this migratory game bird.

An estimated 15,300 woodcock hunters took about 42,400 woodcock in 2003. Compared to 2002, this is a 22 percent increase in the number of hunters and 36 percent increase in harvest, reflecting the improved conditions over 2002.

We continue to develop an inventory of woodcock habitats on all public lands, to plan comprehensive, cooperative habitat management on those lands.

Cottontail rabbit harvests continue to decline, due largely to the decreasing acreage of huntable farmland. Last year hunters took an estimated 588,310 cottontails. Ring-necked pheasant harvests are primarily a result of the number of birds released and have remained relatively constant for the past decade. Few pockets of wild pheasants and quail remain in Pennsylvania.

Trappers harvested 6,757 beavers in 2003-04 and beaver numbers have remained relatively unchanged this year. Natural mortality during the severe winter apparently played a role in preventing population growth. The number of nuisance beaver complaints recorded during 2003 was 715, below the previous 10-year annual average of 835.

The coyote harvest has been relatively stable for the past six years, averaging 11,000 annually. We no longer believe that coyote populations are increasing statewide. Prey abundance is the major limiting factor in coyote populations.

Red fox populations appear stable. With harvests averaging about 34,000 over the past 10 years, they appear to have adapted to the intrusion of coyotes overlapping their ranges. The gray fox harvest has fluctuated over the past 10 years. The 1998 harvest was estimated at 32,922, in 2003-04, the estimated harvest was 15,956. We suspect that local disease outbreaks may have played a role in the drop.

Rabies continues to limit raccoons in some western areas of the state but overall, raccoon populations have been stable for the past five years and harvests have been averaging about 110,000 per year.

The mink harvest dropped last year, to around 6,500, after being relatively stable, at about 10,000 mink each year. There is no evidence to suggest that mink populations have declined, and we expect the harvest to rebound this year.

2003-04

The muskrat population has remained steady in recent years, although populations have been depressed in many areas because of declining habitat. Productive marshes, ponds, streams and rivers are needed to sustain muskrats.

Last year 570 permits were issued, from a pool of more than 3,000 applicants, and 140 bobcats (73 males and 67 females) were taken. Despite excessive precipitation and early and sustained freezing conditions, which made trapping difficult, the success rate was 29 percent. The area open to taking bobcats changed slightly with the adoption of WMUs in 2003. During this past season, bobcat harvests were allowed in WMUs 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D (14,797mi^2). With a harvest objective of 175 bobcats, 615 permits were awarded for the 2004-05 season.

Jerry Bish



TAYLOR BISH, Conneaut Lake, with fur she harvested in Crawford County.

Work continued in 2003-04 to assess juvenile bobcat survival. During May 24-June 2, 2004, we found three litters containing 10 kittens, including one litter of five. The kittens were surgically equipped with radio-telemetry implants. As of September 2004, only one kitten had died, seemingly by a hawk or owl.

This year, four river otters were trapped in northeast Pennsylvania and released in the Juniata drainage, bringing the number to 37 that have been released in the drainage. Recent observations suggest that the project is progressing as planned. We hope to release an additional 5 to 10 otters this coming year. Signs requesting information on otter observations have been posted at public access points, and phone lines and email accounts are set up to receive reports.

Reports of fisher sightings, roadkills and accidental captures have steadily increased since reintroduction efforts were completed in 1998. Prior to 2000, annual reported fisher sightings numbered fewer than 100. Since 2000, sightings have increased each year, peaking last year at 206 and the number of roadkills doubled to 20 over the year before. Fishers have have been reported in all but 25 counties.

With the agency continuing to participate in the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping, this year four trapper-technician teams tested the efficiency, selectivity, practicality, safety and humaneness of three restraining devices for gray foxes. These devices include #1.5 Victor padded trap (4-coiled), #2 BMI padded trap and the Belisle foot snare. During two weeks of field testing, 32 gray foxes were captured.

Responsibility for managing every one of Pennsylvania's 465 species of birds and mammals is literally overwhelming. For "nongame", we focus on the 38 species of special concern that have suffered, directly or indirectly, from human encroachment. Much time is spent surveying these animals and evaluating their survival.

Through our colonial bird survey, we have identified two growing threats to the state's largest black-crowned night-heron and great egret rookery, on Wade Island in the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg: erosion and a rapidly expanding population of double-crested cormorants. To alleviate these threats, we installed model egrets and mock nests to encourage egrets and herons to start nesting on a neighboring island.

During the annual Wade Island rookery survey, 171 great egret nests, 128 black-crowned night-heron nests and 40 double-crested cormorant nests were found.

The Henslow's sparrow is classified as endangered or threatened in most states where it occurs. In Pennsylvania, thanks to a largely volunteer grassland breeding bird survey, we see that our Henslow's are found most commonly on reclaimed mine lands, indicating a need to promote grasslands in mine reclamation plans.

This past spring a record 79 nesting pairs of bald eagles nested here. Based on this continued recovery, the Ornithological Technical Committee, an advisory committee to the Commission, has recommended that the state change its status from endangered to threatened.

Wildlife Diversity Program mammal research includes surveys of the eastern woodrat, terrestrial mammal species of special concern, summer bat concentrations, bat hibernacula, and a multi-faceted study of the federally endangered Indiana bats at Canoe Creek in Blair County.

In 2003-04, biologist aides surveyed known and potential sites for the state-threatened Allegheny woodrat. Of the 19 fall survey sites, old sign was found at five sites, but no fresh sign was found. In the spring, one new active site in Centre County was found, and three sites had evidence of past use.

With the help of mammalogist James Hart of The Nature Conservancy, we completed a protocol for contractors to use in surveying for the state-endangered least shrew. Most Pennsylvania shrews live in moist, mature forests, but the least shrew prefers old fields, abandoned pastureland and meadows of weeds and grass. Populations in the state are widely scattered and the density of those is low, and conventional small mammal sampling techniques aren't effective on this elusive species.

In 2003, crews surveyed 51 summer bat concentration sites, tallying 58,787 bats in: 13 bat boxes, 9 bat condos, 9 barns, 5 utility buildings, 4 churches, 4 occupied homes, 2 unoccupied homes, 2 highway bridges and 3 other structures. The increased use of bat boxes and condos is, we hope, an indication of growing acceptance of bats and bat management techniques.

During the winter of 2004, surveyors visited 26 hibernacula sites. Twenty-three of the sites contained bats; 14 contained bats of special concern. Major concentrations of wintering bats (80 percent) were found in abandoned mines. Indiana bats were found in a new site — a Beaver County limestone mine gated in 1997. Pennsylvania now has 13 known hibernation sites for the Indiana bat. Mammalogist, Greg Turner, is now overseeing the Indiana bat research and management project in and around Canoe Creek State Park in Blair County. The park hosts both winter and summer roosts of the endangered bat. Artificial roosts and boxes have also been provided and are used for rearing young. The project also includes sampling of insect populations in foraging areas, a federal Biological Assessment for the widening and realignment of U.S. Route 22 and radio-telemetry to determine foraging areas, travel lanes and spring migration routes.

To minimize the impact of disease on wildlife, the Commission, along with other state and federal agencies, completed a "Multi-Agency Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan." This document includes prevention, early detection and response activities to the threat of chronic wasting disease (CWD).

Early detection included testing 60 deer and elk showing signs suggestive of CWD, and testing 55 elk and 2,003 deer collected during the 2003-2004 hunting seasons. CWD was not detected. Harvested elk were also tested for tuberculosis and brucellosis, all results being negative. Costs for CWD surveillance have been partly offset by a $44,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Since 1998, more than 300 Pennsylvania deer and elk showing signs suggestive of CWD have been tested. Also, more than 140 hunter-harvested elk have been tested since 2001, and more than 2,500 deer have been tested since 2002. Forty more elk and 4,000 deer will be tested after the 2004 hunting seasons. It's good news that we have not found CWD within our deer and elk populations, but we're looking for a rare event, and it will take a few more years of active surveillance before we can be reasonably assured that CWD is not present.



Chad Eyler

MEMBERS of the York Chapter #67 Izaak Walton League releasing pheasants raised from the day-old chick program on game lands in York County.

State Wildlife Grants (SWG) funded six new Regional Wildlife Diversity Biologists (RWDB). Following training in the classroom and in the field, they have been working with allied conservation agencies and organizations to provide management recommendations for species of concern on private lands.

A significant requirement of SWG is that each state must produce a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) and submit it for USFWS Federal Aid approval by October 2005. Each state's CWCS must contain elements including special concern species status, habitat inventory, threats analysis, recovery plans, monitoring and adaptive management, plan updating, and coordination with federal, state, and local agencies, and public involvement. Significant strides have been made toward the completion of Pennsylvania's plan. Many cooperative SWG projects have provided or are providing species status, habitat inventory, threats analysis and recovery and management planning.

The peregrine falcon satellite telemetry project that began in 2002 allowed the public to follow wandering fledglings from nests in both Pittsburgh and Harrisburg through journals and animated maps on the PGC website. The winter of 2003-04 provided proof of the harsh realities faced by wildlife — two of four birds died.

For the fall 2003 season, 210,043 pheasants (121,342 males and 88,701 hens) were released to provide hunting opportunities. Birds raised at agency game farms were stocked on State Game Lands, properties enrolled in our public access programs, state parks and federal lands.

Nearly 20,000 pheasants were released for the youth season in October; included were 1,568 birds provided to 22 sportsmen's clubs that qualified to receive birds for mentored youth hunts. Release locations are selected based on suitable pheasant hunting conditions. For the youth season, pheasants were released at sites in 56 counties.

Eleven sportsmen's organizations participating in the day-old chick program were provided 3,240 day-old pheasant chicks to raise and release, helping to augment our propagation efforts. High schools and other organizations conducting embryology projects were provided 356 pheasant eggs and 410 chicks. A total of 6,100 surplus day-old hen chicks and 300 surplus eggs were sold for a total of $3,840, which was deposited in the Game Fund.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Human activities and natural processes have altered habitat quality in many areas, to the detriment of many publicly preferred wildlife species. The protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats work to ensure viable populations of all wildlife. We need to develop and implement habitat programs and projects that recognize the life requirements of desirable species on a landscape scale, regardless of land ownership, to improve conditions for wildlife and ensure their long-term health.

GOAL: Acquire, protect, maintain and enhance an array of habitats on public and private lands.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is enhancing thousands of acres of wildlife habitat here. Between June 1, 2000, and September 15, 2004, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) received 10,926 CREP applications from approximately 6,100 landowners, who offered to enroll 216,401 acres in conservation cover plantings. PGC sponsored wildlife habitat biologists and other NRCS staff completed 9,034 applications and wrote 6,108 conservation plans encompassing 115,434 acres. The FSA approved 5,100 contracts on 102,500 acres. Conservation plantings have been completed on 83,903 acres of farmland, including 22,560 acres of native warm season grasses and more than 600 miles of forest riparian buffers. About 35 percent of the acres planted were enrolled in the PGC Farm-Game and Safety Zone programs.

Recently, CREP was expanded to include Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Clarion, Forest, Warren, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, Washington, Greene, Fayette, Westmoreland, Venango and Allegheny. CREP now includes 59 counties with a cap of 265,000 acres. Sign up in the Ohio River Basin counties began on April 1, 2004. Lower base soil rental rates in these counties allowed us to negotiate higher incentive payments. Farmers and landowners will receive payments ranging from 75 to 225 percent above the base soil rental rate. The more marginal and highly erodible soils will receive higher incentives, and buffers will receive 150 percent. These new counties will bring an additional $102 million federal dollars into Pennsylvania's rural economy over the next 15 years.

We are working toward a final CREP expansion that would include the remainder of Pennsylvania. The proposed Delaware River Basin CREP would request an additional 15,000 acres to be added to this program. If accepted, these acres would bring the total targeted CREP acreage for the entire state to 280,000.

Food and Cover Corps and land managers planted 3,172 acres of grain and 1,355 acres of grasses and legumes for wildlife, and 358 acres were planted in or converted to warm season grasses. About 6,748 acres of wildlife food plots were limed and fertilized to improve wildlife food production, 17,329 acres were mowed to maintain high quality grasses and legumes, and 1,113 acres of field and road borders were cut to provide nesting and escape cover. Wetland restoration work was completed on 23 sites across the state. There were 6,575 trees pruned to improve fruit and seed production, and 562 new nest boxes and 317 waterfowl nest structures were erected.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, through the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC) provided $137,142 in funding and nine work crews to assist with habitat projects such as planting seedlings, erecting stream bank and forest fencing and planting warm season grasses. Crews also constructed storage buildings, painted and made repairs to Food and Cover headquarters, constructed and installed gates, and



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painted and maintained game lands boundary lines.

The agency's Howard Nursery in Centre County produced 2,226,350 seedlings for planting on game lands and public access lands. Twenty-eight species of important food and cover trees and shrubs are grown at and distributed from the nursery. The wood shop produced 2,439 bluebird boxes, 5,317 bluebird box kits, 390 wood duck boxes, and hundreds of squirrel, kestrel, barn owl and bat boxes requested by land managers for placement on game lands.

Maintaining optimum habitat diversity on our forested game lands is an important goal of our Timber Management Program. During the year, 4,821 acres were offered for bidding for commercial timber harvest operations. Another 1,939 acres were treated with herbicide to remove ferns, striped maple, spicebush and low quality beech brush hampering the establishment of more beneficial tree species. Contractors erected 8-foot woven wire fences around 604 acres of recently harvested habitat areas to protect the susceptible new growth from excessive deer browsing. Our Upland Vegetation Management machines were used to treat 455 acres by cutting and shearing advanced growth of woody vegetation so it could revert to an earlier successional, low ground cover, stage.

Commercial timber sales on 4,418 acres produced revenues of $7,383,011, a decrease of $4,741,587 from the previous year. Commercial harvest activities yielded more than 12.7 million board feet of logs and 86,900 tons of pulpwood. Wet weather during the entire year kept many operators from working on our timber sales.

A road network sufficient to carry heavy equipment and comply with the Clean Streams Act and other environmental protection regulations was designed and supervised by our forestry staff. Logging contractors improved 37 miles of haul roads, constructed 14 miles of new roads (which became wildlife food strips after seeding), and placed 138 culverts. The value of these improvements exceeded $694,600 and were costs borne by the timber operators and, thus, deducted from the totals of the timber bids.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (known as Pittman-Robertson or P-R) was signed into law on September 2, 1937, to provide a stable and secure source of funding to the states for the management, conservation and enhancement of wildlife. Funds are derived from an 11 percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition and archery equipment and a 10 percent tax on handguns. P-R funds are apportioned to states based on a ratio of land area, license sales and total population. Upon federal approval, the agency received 75 percent of our expenditures on approved projects. During the federal fiscal year 2004, we received $7,837,535 in P-R funds. This funding supported habitat management and maintenance activities on State Game Lands and Cooperative Public Access Program Lands, and a portion of the Hunter-Trapper Education Program.

One of the greatest challenges the agency continues to face is maintaining its large number of facilities, roads, dams and other structures that support recreational activities of hunters and trappers and all others who take advantage of what we offer. A summary of the agency's infrastructure maintenance requirements includes:

- 410 buildings, including the Harrisburg and six region offices; Howard Nursery; Middle Creek and Pymatuning visitor centers; and an educational pavilion at the elk viewing area. Many of these buildings host public education and outreach programs concerning wildlife diversity and habitat.
- 41 rifle ranges and 11 pistol ranges, which are open to all those who enjoy shooting sports.

- More than 1,000 dams and other water impoundments, including eight high-hazard dams and 135 others that require permits from the state Department of Environmental Protection.
- 2,275 public parking lots, 2,652 miles of administrative roads, and 6,417 miles of boundary lines.

Annual maintenance costs for buildings continue to escalate due primarily to the age of many of the structures. Four of the region office buildings are more than 40 years old and require major renovations or, in the case of the Northwest Region, complete replacement of the building. Along with replacement of the HVAC system at the main headquarters building, the renovation/replacement cost for these five buildings alone is estimated at more than $2.3 million.

On SGL 127, the Bradys Lake Dam was drained and breached during the summer, 2003. However, the Legislature approved and Governor Edward G. Rendell committed more than $2 million in funds for the state Department of Environmental Protection to repair this dam, which may be completed by the end of 2005.

Over the past three years, the Game Commission was forced to remove several dams on State Game Lands. Also, the agency had to drain Seigle Marsh Dam until repairs — estimated to cost more than $250,000 — can be made to the dam.

The Commission owns approximately 50 bridges that require inspection once every two years under the federal National Bridge Inspection System Program. Scheduled to begin in 2004-05, these inspections will cost about $175,000 for the first two years, and about $125,000 per year thereafter, and, the inspection results will likely accelerate the major repair or replacement schedule for larger bridges. The ongoing repair and/or replacement of bridges and culverts is required not only for public access to State Game Lands, but also for timber harvesting and other land management access requirements.

Wildlife Habitat Protection

A comprehensive habitat management program provides environmental protection and monitoring to assure that habitat degradation is alleviated, reduced and mitigated. Traditionally, environmental protection has focused on air, water and soil quality. Although these concerns are essential, wildlife and habitat values should be incorporated in environmental protection. The commission strives for recognition of wildlife and its habitat as a valuable natural resource, just like air, water and soil.

GOAL: Ensure wildlife habitat values are considered in the decision making procedure involving alterations to the environment.

Through the Oil/Gas & Mineral Recovery Section, nine new leases were awarded. These leases are for the production of coal, natural gas, and mineral aggregates, and include varied wildlife habitat restoration and habitat improvement projects. Many of the leases were structured for the Commission to acquire additional game land acres. The total for all oil/gas and mineral recovery leases stands at 56 companies on 43 game lands for fiscal year revenues and land acquisitions valued at $2,179,641, an increase of $308,227 from the previous year.

The Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division is involved in numerous remining initiatives and Growing Greener projects sponsored by local watershed associations. Partnering with the PA Bureau of Mining and Reclamation, the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, many mining companies and the local watershed groups,



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we have been able to eliminate abandoned mine pits, highwalls, spoil piles, tipple areas and acid mine discharges on many game lands throughout the state. Benefits from these projects include the enhancement of wildlife habitats, the elimination of safety hazards, and the overall reduction of environmental pollution.

In addition, the Division reviewed and commented on 1,856 permit applications for potential impacts to state and federally listed threatened or endangered bird and mammal species. These reviews included 382 mining permit applications, 682 highway and transportation projects and 792 requests for information from consulting firms and state and federal agencies. The Commission's objective in reviewing these projects is to ensure that all reasonable measures are being taken to avoid unnecessary losses to wildlife and their affiliated habitats, to mitigate for any wildlife habitat loss, as well as to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations.

Land Access

Cooperative agreements with public and private landowners permit the commission to secure land for recreation and develop a network of conservation oriented individuals who participate in other habitat management projects. We intend to continue efforts to encourage public and private interests to incorporate public hunting and conservation projects in their land use plans.

GOAL: Provide access to public and private lands for public hunting, trapping and other wildlife related recreational activities.

In fiscal year 2003, the Commission acquired 7,604 acres, bringing the total State Game Land acreage on which the agency pays in-lieu-of taxes to 1,429,605. The State Game Lands system now includes 302 tracts in 65 counties. Local government bodies received $1.20 per acre in-lieu-of taxes, as required by Act of May 17, 1929. During the fiscal year $1,715,526 was divided into three equal payments to the county, school district and township where State Game Lands are located.

The Game Commission's public access programs continue to provide public hunting opportunities on private lands. The Cooperative Farm-Game Program, which is the oldest of our three programs, began in 1936. A Farm-Game Project consists of many contiguous farms/properties totaling at least 1,000 acres. Today there are 188 Farm-Game projects located in 59 counties consisting of 21,288 agreements with landowners keeping 2,438,534 acres open to hunting. The Safety Zone Program was formally adopted in 1958 for landowners with 50 or more acres outside an established Farm-Game Project. The Safety Zone Program had 1,219,356 acres of land enrolled through 7,568 agreements with private landowners in 2003. The Forest-Game Program was created in 1971 for single landowners with approximately 1,000 or more acres. During fiscal year 2003 we had 79 landowners signed in the Forest-Game Program, opening public hunting on 628,745 acres. All total, we have almost 29,000 landowners keeping almost 4.3 million acres of private land open to hunting.

Some of the benefits provided to cooperators include a free subscription to *Game News*, tree and shrub seedlings, wildlife food and cover seed mix, increased law enforcement protection, protection from "nuisance lawsuits" under the Landowner Liability Act for lands open to the public, safety zone and other signs, technical guidance on wildlife conservation practices and, depending on funding and personnel constraints, labor and equipment to help cooperators develop wildlife habitat on their properties.

The success of the Cooperative Public Access Programs is due to the generosity of the cooperators who enroll their properties and to the dedication of all the Commission representatives, especially the Food and Cover Corps employees and the Deputy WCOs, who promote these programs and diligently strive to uphold the Commission's responsibilities under each agreement. Hunters also have a vital role in these Cooperative Public Access Programs. The Commission expects hunters and trappers to be honest, ethical and respectable when on these private lands. Hunters must continue to live up to these expectations if these programs are to remain viable.

Communications and Education

The effective communication of knowledge and information is essential for a public conservation agency. Over the years, the commission has developed many programs to inform people about the value of wildlife and commission activities. Increasing this knowledge and appreciation for wildlife can be accomplished only through an effective education and communications effort.

Goal: Expand and improve communication, education and outreach for public awareness and understanding of wildlife resource management.

During this year, to promote safety and responsibility among hunters and trappers the Hunter-Trapper Education Division revised our basic HTE curriculum to meet the national standards for basic hunter training as established by the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA). This new curriculum is structured in two parts, knowledge and skills. The knowledge-based component will be available to students through a traditional classroom setting, or through an independent study option, which students may complete either on an Internet-based course or a printed manual/workbook. The knowledge component requires about eight hours of study, regardless of the method chosen. After completing the knowledge component, all students must attend a skill-based training session. At this skills class, which takes about five hours, students will be involved in extensive firearm handling activities, including simulated or actual live-fire exercises. It is at this skills event that all students are evaluated and tested. Students are certified if they successfully complete all of the training.

To meet this objective, nearly 1,200 firearms have been purchased, along with laser training devices, mock training firearms, videos, posters, visual aids, projection equipment and program-related materials. A new 128-page training manual, *Today's Hunter & Trapper in Pennsylvania*, has been developed, and a new, comprehensive instructor's guide, which contains extensive lesson plans, has also been produced. The development of a companion web-based training course specific to Pennsylvania promises to be the cornerstone of a customer friendly approach to providing hunter education in the future. Nearly a half-million dollars have been invested in these significant program upgrades, most of which came from federal aid grants administered by the USFWS.

Beginning in 2005, six counties — Mercer, Indiana, Lycoming, Snyder, Wyoming and Lehigh — will pilot this new HTE format. Statewide implementation is slated for 2006.

The agency continues to provide advanced hunter education training with the voluntary Bowhunter Education program. This course of study consists of a 6-hour independent study module and a one-day, 8-hour class. Some 50 classes certify nearly 1,000

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students annually. The curriculum, designed to meet IHEA standards for bowhunter training, features hands-on training for both new and veteran bowhunters. Big game anatomy and shot placement, shooting exercises, hunting methods and techniques, big game recovery and care, treestand use and safety, basics of using a map and compass together with distance estimation are but a few of the lessons. Much of the training is conducted outdoors. Students who complete the training receive certification that is accepted across North America.

A new student manual and online independent study course are being reviewed and considered for use in the coming year. Similar in design and concept to the agency's new Internet-based course for basic HTE, the new bow ed. web course is being developed by the National Bowhunter Education Foundation (NBEF).

Recently, the HTE Division began to develop an advanced trapping/furtaking course. Division staff attended training in Ohio, conducted by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). IAFWA is completing the development of trapper education standards for North America.

The agency continues to conduct a Remedial Hunter Education program, mandated for individuals who loose their hunting privileges due to serious violations of the Game and Wildlife Code. Before these individuals may purchase a hunting license, they must complete this training focused on safe hunting skills and responsible behavior. Students complete about 16 hours of independent study before attending a one-day, 8-hour class.

The new independent study option for the basic, mandatory HTE course, coupled with the existing distance learning component in Bowhunter Education, will make it easier for students to obtain this training.

To further help potential hunters and trappers, a comprehensive listing of all classes will be available on the agency's website, allowing students to register for classes online. Convenience and efficiency will be the key to the development of this new online registration service, scheduled for completion in early 2005.

The agency's new HTE web course and companion printed manual is a significant step in developing and improving the promotion of hunting and trapping. Anyone with an interest in learning more about hunting or trapping can view or complete this readily available online resource. A similar online course currently being considered for Bowhunter Education will further promote this already popular hunting form. Highly interactive curricula encouraging hands-on training are and will be creating more enjoyment of hunting by hunter education participants.



Shown here with WCO DAVID MYERS, artist CARL W. CLARK's design is Pennsylvania's 2004 duck stamp. Proceeds from the sale of the non-mandatory stamp help finance wetland acquisition and development, and waterfowl management.

Education is a key

component of wildlife conservation, and Wildlife Education Specialists and Supervisors, along with WCOs, offer programs for students and workshops for teachers. Student programs are designed to complement classroom activities and to help teachers meet Pennsylvania's Environment and Ecology Standards. On any given day, you may see a WCO or Wildlife Educator in a school classroom conducting activities on a variety of topics such as adaptations, habitat and predator/prey relationships.

Once again the Commission received approval from the Department of Education to provide teachers with ACT 48 hours for workshops offered by the Commission or designees. These approvals are good for three years. The Game Commission sponsors Project WILD, a national hands-on, interdisciplinary conservation education program. Through this program, this year more than 1,400 teachers participated in workshops on wildlife biology, ecological concepts and wildlife issues. Sixty basic Project WILD workshops were offered, along with 10 advanced workshops addressing topics such as peregrine falcon recovery, deer biology and issues, black bears, waterfowl, landscaping for wildlife, science and civics and threatened and endangered species.

This year 500 additional educators participated in Pennsylvania Songbird and PA Biodiversity workshops sponsored by the Commission. Pennsylvania Songbirds was developed by the Game Commission in partnership with DCNR's Bureau of State Parks and Audubon Pennsylvania. This curriculum supplement addresses songbird biology, ecological concepts and songbird issues, and contains background information and activities that help address Environment and Ecology Standards.

The Commission continues to participate in the Governor's School for Environment and Ecology for Teachers, directed by the Department of Education's Office of Environment and Ecology. This week-long course offers background knowledge, field experiences and hands-on activities to help teachers address the Environment and Ecology Standards. This year Commission wildlife educators worked with educators from DCNR to offer "PA Biodiversity" and "Pennsylvania Songbirds" workshops. In addition, Commission educators continued to offer a "Threatened and Endangered Species" workshop and expanded offerings to include a "WILD About Deer" workshop.

Through the WILD Action Grant program, 20 schools and youth groups were awarded grants for projects to improve wildlife habitat and environmental study areas. The grant funds for 2003-04 year were provided by the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and the Game Commission.

We hope readers enjoyed the old stories, photos and art we featured to commemorate the 75th anniversary of *Game News*. For 75 years, Game News has been the primary voice of the Game Commission, and in 2004, the look back over 75 years was most enjoyable.

The hunting stories, natural history content and, as always, Field Notes, remain popular with many readers, not just in Pennsylvania, but also throughout the country and to our servicemen and women throughout the world. *Game News* also features plenty of articles about Game Commission research and management projects, law enforcement accounts by our WCOs, and as much agency news as ever before.

Game News is also a popular part of the agency's website. Every month we feature our cover and provide descriptions of articles, the editorial, some Field Notes, news items, and entire features about law enforcement accounts and Game Commission projects and programs.

Several of our columnists, writers and artists won craft awards from professional outdoor communication organizations for their work in *Game News*. Gregg Rinkus won third place in the story category of the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Step

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Outside Writing and Photo Contest contest for his entry "Beyond the Tag," from the March 2004 issue. From the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association (POWA), Bob Steiner won Best Published Black & White Photograph, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs for a red squirrel that appeared in the December 2003 issue. Archery columnist Tom Tatum won the POWA Pennsylvania Deer Award sponsored by the Pennsylvania Deer Association for "Don't Shoot," published in October 2003. Mike Simmons got the POWA Youth & The Shooting/Hunting Sports Award sponsored by Ithaca Gun Company for "Father's Day," which was featured in the June 2003 issue. Bob Sopchick captured the POWA Wild Turkey Award sponsored by the NWTF for "The Bones of Spring," featured in his Penn's Woods Sketchbook column in the April 2003 issue. Gregg Rinkus also won the POWA Pass It On Award sponsored by Bass Pro Shops for his article "Beyond the Tag."



Bob D'Angelo

OTHER PUBLICATIONS produced by *Game News* staff were brochures featuring "Hunting in Northwestern Pennsylvania," which was the last in a series of six brochures.

We continue to work to improve the public knowledge about Pennsylvania wildlife conservation programs, hunting and trapping and the Game Commission's role in protecting and improving wildlife habitats.

We have increased the number and types of news releases being offered. Feature news releases on trapping, wildlife nuisance control, bald eagle recovery, fisher reintroduction update, deer research are part of some of the newer offerings. In addition, the number of news releases on upcoming seasons, employee recognition and Board actions have increased, providing more useful information to hunters and trappers.

Several video productions have been provided to field officers to use for presentations to various groups — from school groups to sportsmen's clubs. Subjects include history and duties of the Game Commission; the agency's State Game Land habitat work; the bobcat research program; and the bald eagle reintroduction program and recovery.

Along with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, we have partnered with Gander Mountain to provide viewers of WHTM-ABC27 a weekly one-minute "Midstate Outdoors" segment in the 6 p.m. sports newscast. These segments highlight Game Commission wildlife management activities, programs and upcoming seasons.

This marks the ninth year the Game Commission has been coordinating the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) program in Pennsylvania. BOW is designed to help adult women learn more about outdoor skills. This year brought several firsts: the first Beyond BOW HTE course; first time BOW volunteers staffed information booths; first event for adults with physical challenges; and the first camp out on the trail. Two favorite events were the Beyond BOW Hawk Watching workshop at Hawk Mountain and the Beyond BOW Turkey Hunting Clinic.

We had lots of partners this year, including Cabela's, Eastern Mountain Sports, Gander Mountain, Kinsey's Outdoors, Lancaster County Environmental Center, PA Fish and Boat Commission and the Southern Clinton County Sportsmen's Association. The National Rifle Association granted money to purchase six in-line muzzleloaders and 40 sets of eye and ear protection. Many other sponsors and donors contributed to the program, including the Conservation Officers of PA Association, the Lehigh Valley Chapter of Safari Club International and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.



CORY ALTIZER, second from left, bagged this ringneck during the special Youth Pheasant Season. From left to right: PGC Executive Director VERN ROSS, CORY, TYLER WALTON, York County deputies GEORGE ERSKINE, KEVIN CLOUSER and ROBERT SIMMONDS.

PA BOW rounded out this fiscal year with more than 270 workshop participants and continues publishing the quarterly, *BOW Seasons* newsletter, sent to more than 1,200 women.

For 2003, 24 sportsmen's organizations hosted hunts for the Youth Pheasant season. Most clubs received live pheasants from the PGC to release for their instructional hunts. The PGC also released 18,000 birds on more than 75 sites open to public hunting for the hunt. Results from windshield survey indicate that most of the participating youngsters saw pheasants, that more than half harvested birds, that most were hunting with a male relative and that about 30 percent were 12 years old.

The number of items marketed increased, especially those sold via "The Outdoor Shop" on the agency's website. Internet sales went from 13,213 to 13,416 and total sales went from 50,610 to 50,710. In 2004, the agency recorded its highest sales ever at the Eastern Sports and Outdoor Show: $28,047.88. The previous high was $18,798.14

In 2003-04, more than 100 billboards were donated by the Pennsylvania Outdoor Advertising Association for periods of one, two and three months, to further the Game Commission mission.

The agency created a donation section on its website. In the few months that it was up, $3,094 was contributed through 6/30/04, and contributions continued to grow.

We reorganized the layout of our prints on our website, which will allow our customers to more easily navigate and understand which prints are for sale. All print sales support our Working Together for Wildlife program, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary and has done much to secure and improve wildlife habitats for game and nongame species throughout Pennsylvania.

The deer knife was the third in our series of collectible Case knives, and as with our previous two, was a complete sell out. The bear knife has since been released, and an elk knife will follow. With the growing interest in bird watching, the bird "Identifyler" (which identifies birds by songs) is already a big hit at Middle Creek and Pymatuning, and can be ordered over the web. Also, a new series of patches (Field Notes) designed by well-known artist Nick Rosato is off to great start, and if you have not gotten the first one there are still some left.

2003-04

Law Enforcement

Illegal and over-harvest of wildlife and wildlife habitat destruction have caused the extirpation, even extinction, of some wildlife species and adversely impacted many others. These factors continue to remain a constant threat to our valuable wildlife resources. It is the responsibility of the Bureau of Law Enforcement to promote the safe and responsible consumptive and non-consumptive uses of these wildlife resources by developing and enforcing laws and regulations to protect wildlife populations and habitat, and to ensure that officers are properly equipped, trained and supported to protect these resources for all commonwealth citizens.

Goal: Protect the wildlife resources of the commonwealth, and ensure the safe and responsible use of these resources through the fair and equitable enforcement of wildlife laws.

With a full complement of Wildlife Conservation Officers (136), along with approximately 600 Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers, our field personnel prosecuted 8,333 cases during calendar year 2003, and issued 12,532 warnings. A total of $1,540,444 in penalties was assessed, averaging $184.86 per violation.

As a result of major violations, 1,101 individuals had their privilege to hunt or trap in Pennsylvania revoked. Additionally, 236 first-time offenders convicted of hunting over bait received a letter informing them that any subsequent conviction of hunting over bait will result in a license revocation.

During calendar year 2003, 16 persons lost their hunting and furtaking privileges because of failure to respond to citations, and 493 had their privileges revoked for failing to pay their penalty in full within the required 180 days. Following notification to these individuals, 350 met their obligations and their privileges were restored. Also during 2003, $1,471 was expended from the Game Fund to supply and erect four bear deterrent fences to qualified beekeepers, and $16,989 was spent to pay 63 claims for bear damage to bees, livestock and poultry.

The volume of special permit applications continues to escalate. Bird banding, collecting, dog training, endangered species, falconry, fox chasing, fur dealers, regulated hunting grounds, taxidermy, exotic wildlife, propagation, wildlife pest control and wildlife rehabilitation are among the 30 different permits the agency administers. Disabled person permits are the fastest growing category and account for 86 percent of all active permits.

Bob D'Angelo



In fiscal year 2003-04, we issued an additional 6,585 permits, up from 3,300 in the previous year, bringing to more than 55,000 the permits administered. While permit fees received exceeded $621,000, the cost of processing, administering, reviewing and inspecting the activities granted by these permits likely exceeds that amount.

WITH A FULL complement of WCOs in the field, along with approximately 600 deputies, our field personnel successfully prosecuted 8,333 cases during the calendar year 2003.

A total of 32 fences were completed during the 2003-04 fiscal year to protect landowners having trouble with deer and elk. Fencing assistance is provided to qualified land owners/users in the form of materials and construction labor. Qualifying categories are those engaged in general farming, commercial nurseries and commercial orchards.

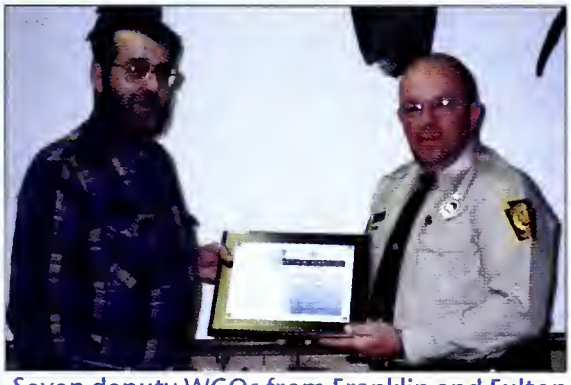
Individuals who feel aggrieved by an agency action or decision can request a review hearing. A total of 33 hearings were requested during the fiscal year. Twenty-five involved the revocation of an individual's hunting/furtaking privileges, 4 concerned special permit denials, 3 were requested to review bear damage claim disputes, and one reviewed the Agency's recall of a hunting license issuing agency.

We are continuing to purchase Vertex mobile radios with both VHF Hi band and VHF Lo band capabilities, to give our officers direct radio communications with the Pennsylvania State Police, DCNR and the Fish and Boat Commission. We are also eliminating all FBI microwave radio connections, which are obsolete, and upgrading to Game Commission equipment.

Human Resources

The Commission recognizes that our employees and volunteers are the agency's most valuable resource. To carry out an effective wildlife management program, we must address the needs of recruiting, training, placing and maintaining a competent and effective work force that will best meet the goals and objectives of our organization and the public we serve. As we meet these goals and objectives, we will provide equal employment opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

Goal: Recruit, develop and maintain an effective workforce to protect and manage the commonwealth's wildlife resources.



Seven deputy WCOs from Franklin and Fulton counties received certification in First Aid and CPR. The training was funded by the South Mountain Fish & Game Association of Franklin County. South Mnt. F&G president GLENN HERROLD receives a certificate of appreciation from WCO BARRY LEONARD.

A significant increase in personnel attending out-service training occurred due to several new agency initiatives in the strategic plan, significant turn-over due to retirements, and technological advances. Yet although total training expenses this year totaled $107,618.80, up from $85,026.00 last year, because a significantly larger number of personnel were trained, the average cost per out-service training event was reduced.

In-service training was also increased during this year, for the same reasons stated relating to out-service training. Some highlights of in-service training provided this year included: Two 4-day new employee orientation sessions; drug identification training for approximately 800 officers; a 3-day computer investigation course taught by the PSP computer forensics unit; a 3-day defensive tactics instructor development session; and a 7-day (72-hour) deputy wildlife conservation officer basic training and orientation.

Administrative Services

2003-04

The Bureau of Administrative Services has the responsibility to insure that all external and internal customers receive the most effective and efficient service. We constantly look at ways of improving our processes to provide better service within the guidelines of the commonwealth's procedures and private sector best business practices.

Goal: Develop a sustainable funding structure that supports the agency's mission and identity.

This division's responsibilities include the ordering, stocking and distribution of all office supplies for the Bureau, along with the warehousing and distribution of uniforms and equipment for field personnel, Hunter-Trapper Ed materials, various Information and Education pamphlets, along with supplies and licenses for issuing agents. It receives and distributes all incoming mail and processes mail destined for region offices, field personnel, news media, license issuing agents, sportsmen's clubs and the general public. The Division printed and mailed all hunting licenses purchased on the Internet and DMAP permits and coupons. This division also prints color and black and white brochures on demand for regions and the headquarters.

As a result of participating with the commonwealth's mail presort program, the Game Commission realized a postage savings of $13,772.57 for fiscal year 2003.

The Division continues to administer and monitor the Game Commission's automotive fleet activities and evaluate the Commission's use of assigned vehicles to ensure minimum vehicle numbers, while continuing to maximize efficient operations. This past year the fleet was reduced by another three vehicles, bringing the reduction of vehicles in Harrisburg to 13 since the pool was initiated.

The Division continues to administer and monitor the Commonwealth Purchasing Card Program for adherence to procurement protocol and established procedures and guidelines. The Game Commission has recently become an active participant in the Works Payment Reconciliation Program. Training has been provided and all Visa Purchase Cardholders or their proxy are now required to reconcile their Visa card transactions on-line.

The Division assists also in the development of products sold through our website and to the public such as the new collectible Case knife series.

We are responsible for the statewide administration of the Non-Law Enforcement Wearing Apparel Program for non-law enforcement employees and oversee the development and maintenance of an ongoing program for approximately four hundred (400) agency personnel who are eligible to receive the apparel.



This Division continues to support the financial end of the Game Commission E-Commerce application, which includes credit card validation for constituents who purchase hunting licenses, game news subscriptions and product/merchandise sales.

THE DIVISION assists in the development of products sold through our website and to the public, such as the new collectible Case knife series.

Licensing

The licensing of hunters and trappers provides approximately 50 percent of the agency's operating income. Additionally, licensing allows the agency to evaluate and control management programs and monitor public participation.

Goal: Promote cost effective and progressive licensing systems while maintaining simplicity and responsiveness to the buyer.

The License Division took on two major new programs in 2003. The first and most significant being the distribution of antlerless deer license applications to county treasurers for the issuance of licenses in 22 wildlife management units (WMUs). Hunters now apply for licenses via Game Commission unit specific post office boxes located in Harrisburg. When the mail arrives at our processing center, envelopes are counted (unopened), batched and shipped to treasurers based on the percentage of land their county represents in a unit. The first week of the 2003 application period, the License Division counted and distributed more than 400,000 applications to treasurers for processing. By the end of August, more than 849,000 applications had been processed through this office. By the end of the season, more than 900,000 applications were batched and shipped to treasurers. Hunters did a fine job adapting to the new application procedures, and most were successful in obtaining licenses for a WMU of their choice.

The second new initiative we undertook involved the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), processing harvest coupons and remittances, data entry and issuance of harvest permits to more than 23,000 applicants. Harvest permits are issued through a system developed in house, using a high speed automated printing technique. DMAP was well received by hunters its first year and continues to grow in popularity. It offers additional recreational opportunities for sportsmen and sportswomen, while helping landowners to better control deer.

The following licenses were issued for the 2003-04 license year:

Resident Adult	744,856
Resident Junior	53,739
Resident Junior Combination	51,064
Resident Senior	39,099
Resident Landowner	1,740
Nonresident Adult	64,832
Nonresident Junior	2,673
Nonresident Junior Combination	771
Nonresident 7-Day	2,676
Resident Archery	271,162
Nonresident Archery	13,959
Resident Muzzleloader	179,339
Nonresident Muzzleloader	9,049
Resident Migratory Game Bird License	113,232
Nonresident Migratory Game Bird License	4,477
Resident Antlerless Deer	912,061
Nonresident Antlerless Deer	33,976
Resident Adult Furtaker	21,053
Resident Junior Furtaker	376
Resident Senior Furtaker	836
Nonresident Adult Furtaker	187
Nonresident Junior Furtaker	1
Resident Bear	119,998
Nonresident Bear	3,913
Senior Lifetime Hunting	3,049
Senior Lifetime Combination	2,701
Senior Lifetime Combination (Upgrades)	291
Senior Lifetime Renewal Hunting	50,757
Senior Lifetime Furtaker	1
Elk (26,577 applications)	98
Bobcat (3,563 applications)	570
DMAP (coupons redeemed)	23,348

Total Revenue Received: $37,404,597
(Figure includes application fees for elk & bobcat)

2003-04

Information Technology

The Game Commission has a strong commitment to information technology and recognizes the tremendous benefits of innovative, technological solutions to information management. This program area services all commission programs and provides a backbone for communication, data analysis, financial operations, statistical analysis, and many other essential functions.

Goal: Provide the latest advances in information technology for solutions to program objectives.

Disaster recovery continues to be an emphasis for the commonwealth and the Game Commission. Based upon the results from our first mainframe computer disaster recovery test, our test plan was revised and backup tapes altered to fill in the gaps we encountered in our initial test. The second disaster recovery test of our mainframe system was a success. This winter we will conduct a third test involving all commonwealth agencies using similar mainframe computing platforms.

Scott Rheam



THE DRAWING process for our bobcat permits has been changed from a manual process to an automated drawing. This process uses a random number generator to select the predetermined number of permit winners. This has eliminated the printing of thousands of cards each year for the drawing process.

In an effort to create more reliable, full-featured desktop computing applications we have integrated SQL Server software into our computing environment. SQL adds a client/server database to our computing toolset, allowing us to create distributed applications that use a centralized database.

We have conducted a license sales study to examine the direction of our license sales program. Based upon recent changes in technology and the cost savings that can result the study vendor recommended that the Game Commission implement a Point-of-Sale automated license sales system. Licenses will be sold with a computer and printer installed at each Sales Agent location. This system will create a database of license buyers making harvest reporting cheaper and easier, shorten the time it takes a hunter to purchase a license and save the commission money in the long run. License sales agents will experience shorter lines of license buyers due to efficient sales methods, reduced bonding requirements and reduced space required for license sales due to the reduction in paper forms.

The development of a DMAP (Deer Management Assistance Program) application created a file of participating landowners, permit recipients and antlerless deer harvest records. As part of this initiative we will modify our electronic commerce site to accept on-line harvest reports. This will be a pilot for the potential acceptance of general harvest reporting through the Internet. Deer management applications are data entered as well as all permits that are issued.

In keeping with the commonwealth standards for website development, we have

converted our website to use the DSF (Dynamic Site Framework) developed for the commonwealth. This conversion allows us to make use of on-line calendaring, use personnel from different areas of the commission to publish content in their respective areas and opens up our web site to future enhancements that we otherwise would not have. The number of unique visitors to our site has increased dramatically as well as return visitors. We currently have more than 1,600 people registered to our site who are capable of receiving any new content we choose to send them via email.

As the threat of infiltration into our network by computer viruses and hackers has grown, we have tried to keep pace with software upgrades released and the implementation of methods to prevent attack. To this end, this year we have installed a firewall and proxy server. While the fine-tuning of these devices is not yet complete, they have served to block the infection of our network on many occasions. We'll continue to optimize their operation and reinforce the need for virus protection software upgrades.

We have taken the initiative to modify our special form printing jobs to use standard paper or postcard stock. This will eliminate the expense of custom printed forms and reduce the quantity of stock we must warehouse.

The drawing process for our bobcat permits has been changed from a manual process to an automated drawing. This process uses a random number generator to select the predetermined number of permit winners. This has eliminated the printing of thousands of cards each year for the drawing process. We expect this type of process to be used by other applications in the future.

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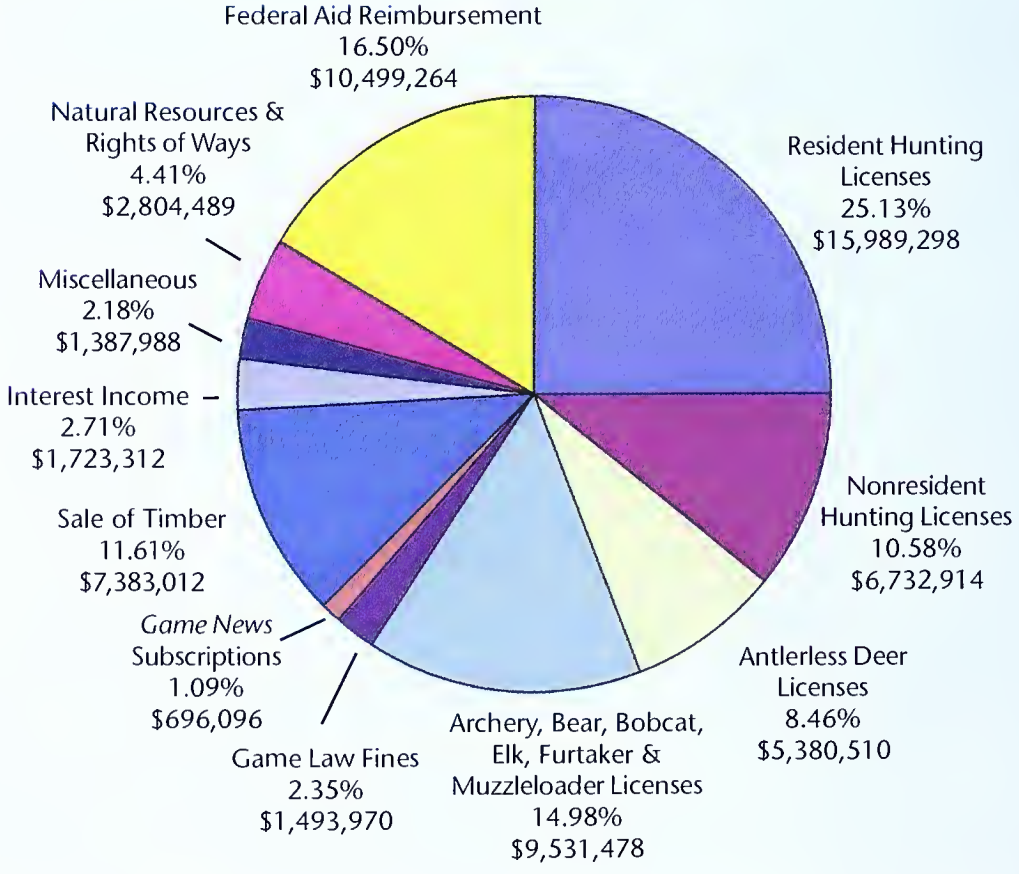
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PGC Financial Report
July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004
Mary K. Delutis
Comptroller

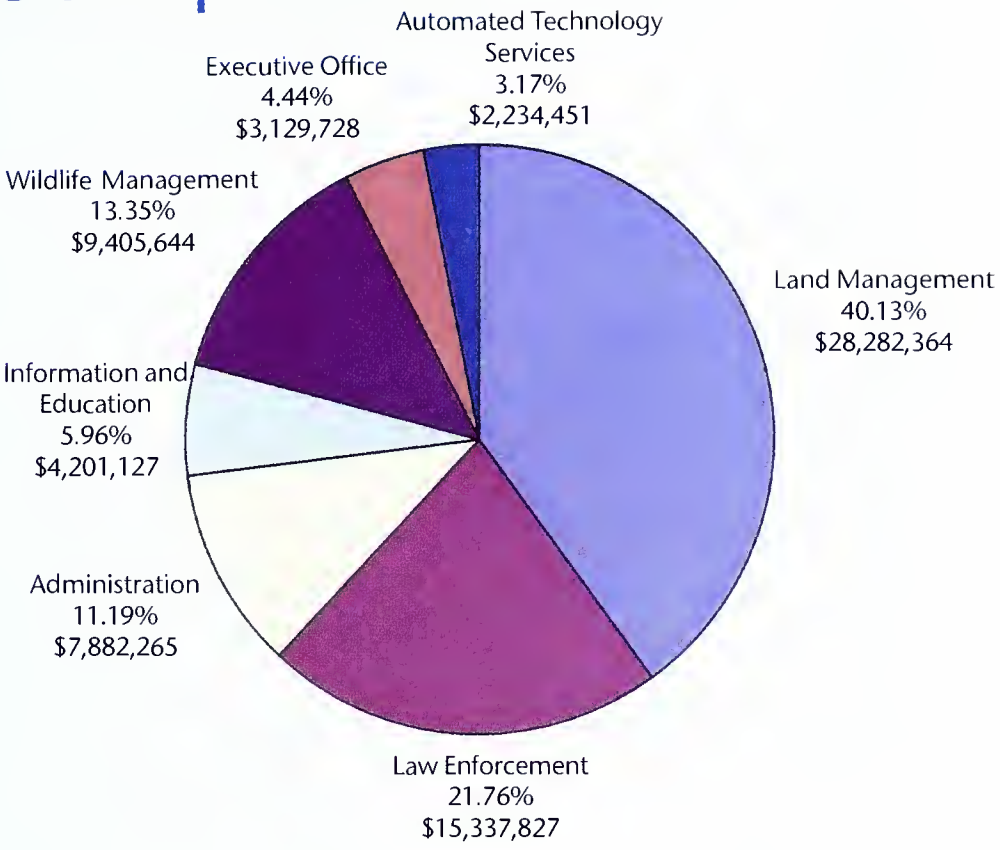
The accompanying Balance Sheet and Statement of Changes in Fund Balance were prepared using the modified accrual basis of accounting, whereby revenue earned and amounts expended or payable at June 30, 2004 are reported. On this basis of accounting, the June 30, 2004 Unreserved/Undesignated Fund Balance in the Game Fund was $14,035,398, a decrease of $5,710,596 from June 30, 2003. Fiscal year 2003-04 expenditures exceeded revenue earned and prior year lapses, resulting in the decrease in the Game Fund Unreserved/Undesignated Balance.

All other schedules included in this report were prepared on a cash basis combined with an encumbrance budgetary system. Actual revenue collected and credited to the Game Fund during 2003-04 was $63,622,331, an increase of $259,133 over the previous year's actual cash receipts. Resident licenses increased $306,616, or 1.96 percent, while nonresident hunters licenses increased $576,322, or 9.36 percent. Interest income increased by $866,156, or 101.05 percent. Offsetting these increases was a decrease

2003-04 Revenue



2003-04 Expenditures



in sale of timber and wood products of $4,656,154, or 38.68 percent. Antlerless deer licenses decreased by $382,737, 6.64 percent.

Current year expenditures, commitments, and balance available for direct expenditures posted to the records at June 30, 2004 totaled $70,473,406, an increase of $3,899,637, or 5.86 percent from the previous year. Salary, benefits and training costs increased $3,244,442, or 7.22 percent. Printing and advertising increased $421,954 or 30.87 percent. Land purchases and acquisition costs decreased $1,039,790, or 51.9 percent.

Act 138 of 2002 amended the Game Code sections relating to mandatory spending. The Game Code stipulates that a minimum of $4.25 from each resident and nonresident license and a minimum of $2.00 from each antlerless deer license issued for which the full fee has been paid is to be used for habitat improvement, development, maintenance, protection and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game and wildlife on all lands under the control or operations of the Commission, including lands enrolled in the Commission's public access programs and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the Commission. The money collected for the above are deposited into one separate account.

The number of resident and nonresident licenses sold during 2003-04 totaled 965,460. Antlerless deer licenses sold totaled 946,037. This mandated that a minimum of $5,995,279 be expended for the above-mentioned purposes. The actual amount expended and committed in the restricted account during the fiscal year for these purposes, was $8,028,964, an excess of $2,033,685 over the requirement.

Game Fund Balance Sheet
June 30, 2004

Assets	
Cash	$143,456
Temporary investments	30,976,270
Accounts receivable	129,746
Due from other funds	104,931
Due from Federal government	42,513
Total Assets	$31,396,916
Liabilities And Fund Balance	
Liabilities:	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	$6,658,929
Securities lending obligations	6,558,732
Due to other funds	481,183
Due to pension trust fund	19,922
Due to political subdivisions	21,147
Due to other governments	672,942
Total Liabilities	$14,412,855
Fund balance:	
Reserved for Encumbrances	$2,359,250
Reserved for Restricted Revenue	589,413
Unreserved:	
Undesignated	14,035,398
Total Fund Balance	$16,984,061
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	$31,396,916

Game Fund Statement of Changes in Fund Balance For The Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2004

Revenues:	
Licenses and fees	$39,632,728
Intergovernmental	8,398,005
Charges for sales and services	11,630,941
Investment income	1,491,383
Total Revenue	**$61,153,057**
Expenditures:	
Current:	
Recreations and cultural enrichment	$60,391,374
Capital outlay	6,024,708
Total Expenditures	**$66,416,082**
Net Change In Fund Balance	**$(5,263,025)**
Fund Balance July 1, 2003	**$22,247,086**
Fund Balance June 30, 2004	**$16,984,061**

Schedule of Actual Revenue Deposited in Game Fund Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2004

LicensesAnd Fees	
Resident hunting—adult	$14,279,570

Resident hunting—junior	273,800
Resident hunting—senior	470,885
Resident lifetime hunting—senior	143,414
Resident junior combination	409,606
Resident senior lifetime combination	264,461
DMAP harvest permit (residents)	140,169
Nonresident hunting	6,456,786
Nonresident hunting—junior	156,499
Nonresident junior combination	39,058
Resident bear	1,784,005
Nonresident bear	146,154
Antlerless deer	4,541,876
Nonresident antlerless deer	838,634
Archery	3,997,780
Nonresident archery	392,333
Muzzleloader hunting	1,770,813
Nonresident muzzleloader	194,588
Landowner hunting	7,394
Nonresident 7-day hunting	80,571
Resident furtaker—adult	407,841
Resident furtaker—junior	2,474
Resident furtaker—senior	10,705
Senior lifetime furtaker	132
Nonresident furtaker—adult	21,332
Nonresident furtaker—junior	412
Issuing agents' application fee	53,474
Special game permits	325,123
Right-of-way	470,355
Migratory game bird	233,644
Nonresident migratory game bird	26,235
Bobcat permit application	15,866
Elk license application	143,655
Resident elk	2,286
Nonresident elk	2,625
Transfer to general habitat improvement	(7,647,683)
Total Licenses and Fees	**$30,456,872**
Fines And Penalties	
Game Law fines	1,493,970
Total Fines and Penalties	**$1,493,970**
Miscellaneous Revenue	
Interest on securities & deposits	$1,723,312
Sale of timber & other wood products	7,383,012
Ground rentals & royalties from oil and gas lease	1,770,811
Sale of *Game News*	696,096
Sale of coal, gravel, hay	523,378
Wildlife promotional publications and materials	243,576
Wildlife nongame fund	130,767
Waterfowl management: stamp sales and art print royalties	39,945
Sale of skins and guns	34,521
Other (game land map sales, SPORT promotional publications, prior year expenditure refunds, shipping fees and miscellaneous revenue)	310,562
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	**$12,855,980**

Total Nontax Revenue	**$44,806,822**
Restricted Receipts & Revenue	
Resident licenses fee - natural propagation of wildlife - general habitat improvement	7,647,683
Total Restricted Receipts & Revenue	**$7,647,683**
Augmentations	
Federal aid	$10,499,264
State augmentations (sale of vehicles, PA conservation corps, donations, PennDOT reimbursement)	668,562
Total Augmentations	**$11,167,826**
Grand Total All Revenue In Game Fund	**$63,622,331**

Expenditures And Commitments Current Funds For The Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2004

Salaries and wages	$34,437,263
State share employee benefits and training costs	13,757,100
Land purchases and acquisition costs	962,219
Printing and advertising	1,788,611
Automotive repairs, supplies, and transportation rentals	1,565,196
Payments to local municipalities in-lieu-of-taxes	1,713,904
Maintenance, rental and improvements of building, grounds, and machinery	1,393,407
Payments to other state agencies for specialized services	1,356,488
Agriculture and maintenance material supplies	1,599,492
Purchase of motor vehicles	1,206,158
Travel and special conference expenses	510,936
Radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance service	861
Telephone expenses	587,959
Postage and freight expenses	840,938
Heating, electric and water	477,033
Legal and specialized services	2,724,699
Other supplies and services	265,970
Uniforms for game commission personnel	206,593
Office equipment, maintenance, rentals, and supplies	792,855
Purchase of equipment and machinery	578,293
Electronic data processing contractual services, rentals, and purchases	772,200
Educational supplies, literature, memberships and classroom training equipment	523,800
Insurance — auto, liability, fidelity	152,943
Clinical services, laboratory and medical supplies	13,984
Payments to nonprofit institutions	1,442,459
Payments to institutions/individuals for research projects	149,482
Purchasing card expenses	652,563
Total Commitments & Expenses	**$70,473,406**

Game Fund Expenditures and Commitments by Program Area* July 1, 2003 Through June 30, 2004

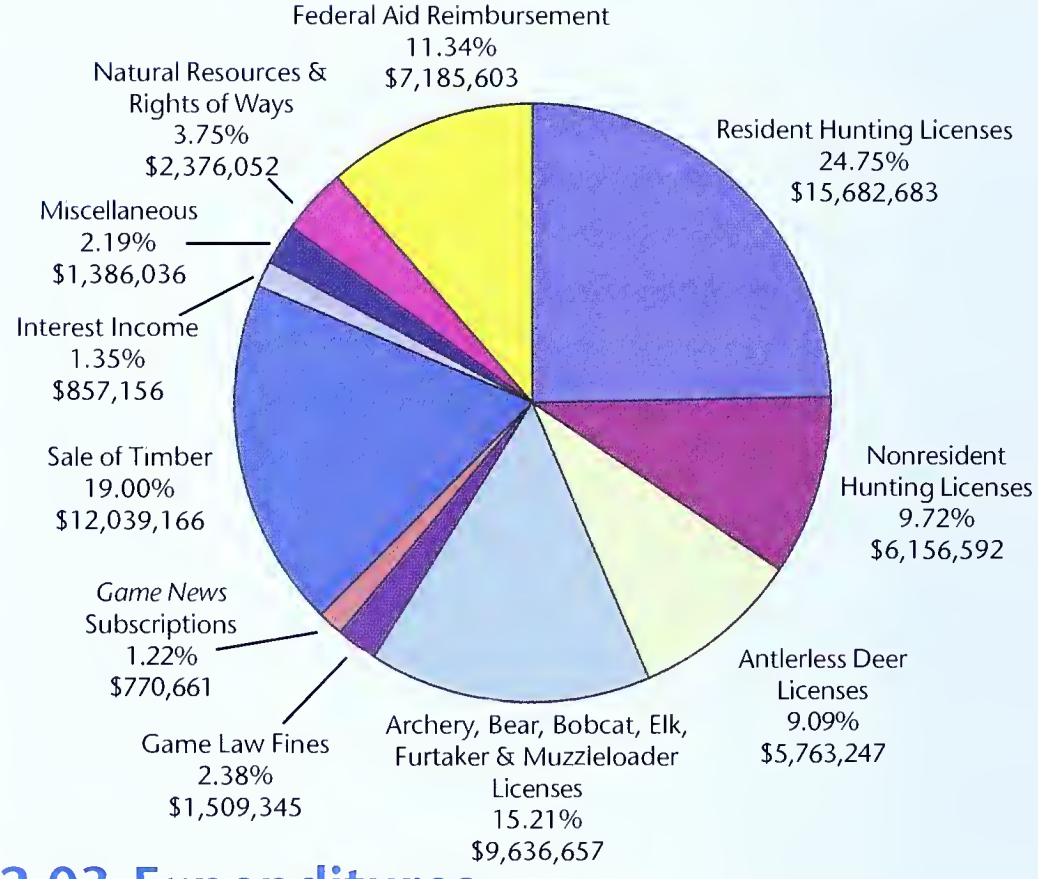
Executive office	$1,971,620
Comptroller operations and centralized services	366,512

Assisting other agencies	66,152
Public works program	78,662
Flood related costs	573
General administration	10,471,369
Personnel costs	8,410,181
Warehousing	39,298
Agency purchasing	1,007,460
Auto acquisition, maintenance, credit card cost	1,922,870
Office maintenance & services	735,951
Training costs	1,062,541
Licensing program	1,390,152
800 telephone service	962
Public services	2,440,052
Publications	1,284,519
Hunter-Trapper Education program	763,233
Bowhunter education program	16,054
Remedial hunter education program	4,489
Audio - visual program	236,288
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	1,274,795
Game farm operations	2,774,563
Wildlife health activities	72,323
Wildlife research support services	1,283,948
Forest wildlife research program	1,345,253
Furbearer and farmland research program	331,866
Migratory game bird & waterfowl research program	374,968
Wildlife diversity research management program	251,139
C.A.R.A. activities	1,886
State wildlife grants	1,538,717
Law enforcement program management & planning	77,418
General law enforcement	7,601,549
Endangered species & nongame law enforcement	18,422
Data center operations	528,687
Computer mainframe application	183,917
Data communications networking	227,580
Desktop computing	510,942
GIS administration and support	82,641
Land management administration	2,819,588
Environmental review program	264,323
Land acquisition	3,882,401
Howard Nursery management	469,422
Herbaceous openings	1,541,976
Public access programs	1,119,409
Forest management	3,143,204
Food producing improvements	568,577
Game lands construction & maintenance	5,670,670
Shooting range construction & maintenance	244,284
Total Commitments & Expenses	$70,473,406

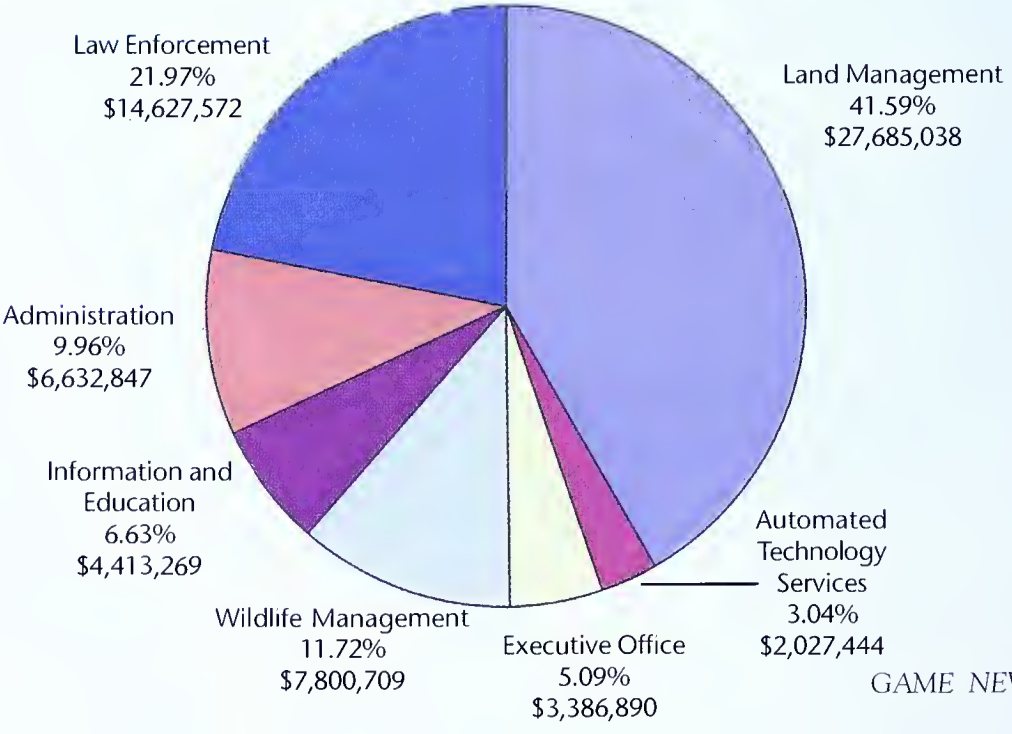
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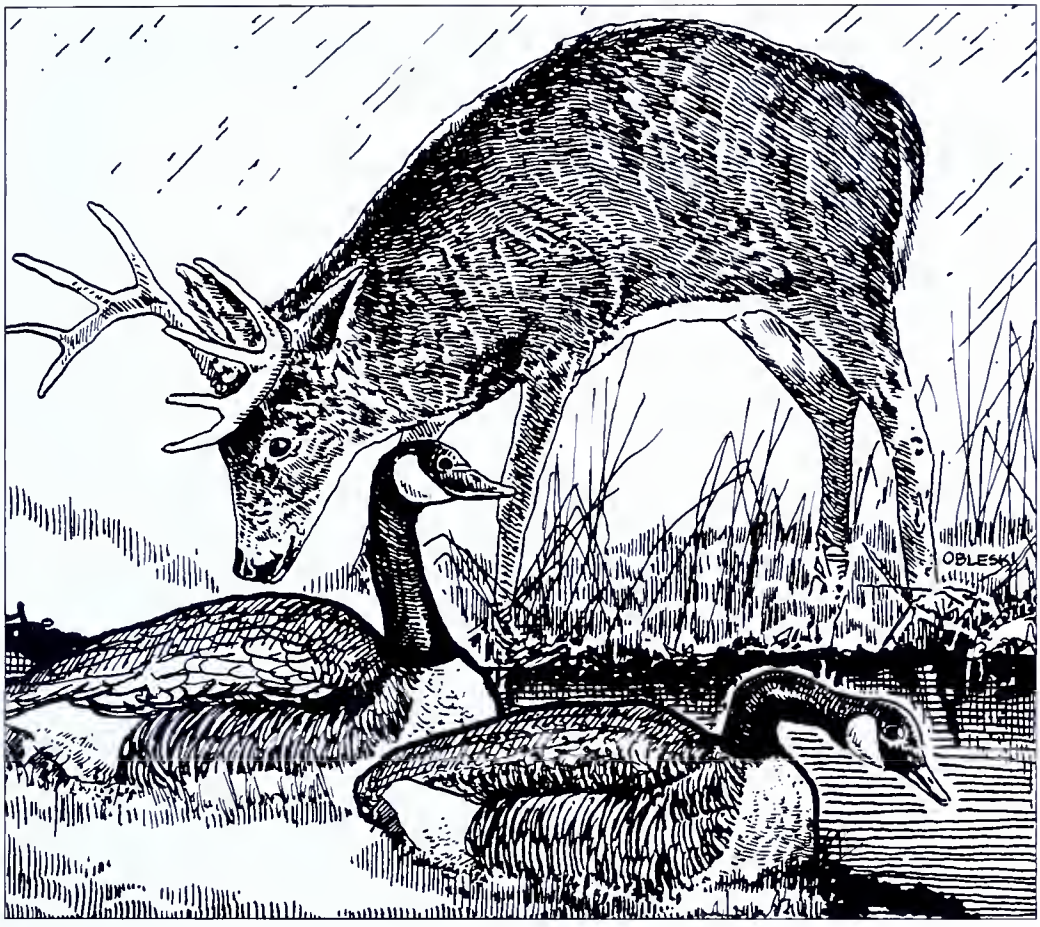
Due to a change in the state accounting system, the 2002-03 Annual Report, in the January 2004 *Game News*, did not include a financial report. The following pie charts show the basic revenue and expenditure information of that fiscal year. For a complete 2002-03 financial report, visit the Game Commission website, www.pgc.state.pa.us

2002-03 Revenue



2002-03 Expenditures





Paying It Forward

By Ralph Martone

THERE WAS A DAY, not long ago, when I hunted with less than a full dose of enthusiasm. Flintlock muzzleloader season was several days old, and despite hunting hard, I had yet to see a deer. Now the weatherman predicted rain starting at noon and continuing for several days. As much I love hunting in the late season, I'm never certain which thrills me more: The feel of a traditional wood stock fitted perfectly to a heavy octagon barrel, or the harsh winter weather with its tracking snow and perfect still-hunting conditions. Now, with no snow and worse yet, rain, in the forecast, much of my early enthusiasm had disappeared.

A morning's hunt in Allegheny County, where there should have been plenty of deer, had barely turned up any sign. After a couple of fruitless hours, I headed north toward Lawrence County. Driving up I-79, I watched as gray rain clouds gathered along the western horizon. Mixing a cold winter's rain and a flintlock rifle is tough, even for a hunting fanatic like me. Looking to-

ward the distant storm clouds, my mood was turning as dark as the sky.

I was surprised to find another hunter when I pulled into the game lands parking lot. As he approached I couldn't help but notice the chest waders and several duck and goose calls hanging from lanyards around his neck. Unlike myself, this hunter welcomed the rain. Thinking back on hundreds of hunters I have met in swamps, thickets, fields and woods, I cannot recall a single meeting that was anything but friendly, and this chance meeting was no exception. We discussed our hunts and weather. My situation with no snow and the pending rain, and his in the melting ice with its resulting open water that should bring in the birds.



To help he told me about deer tracks crossing in the thick grasses along the swamp and of the buck sign near the water's edge. I appreciated his efforts to boost my sagging enthusiasm. In return, I told of geese coming into the swamp on a previous hunt. I pointed to a far end of the swamp where open water often held small flocks of ducks.

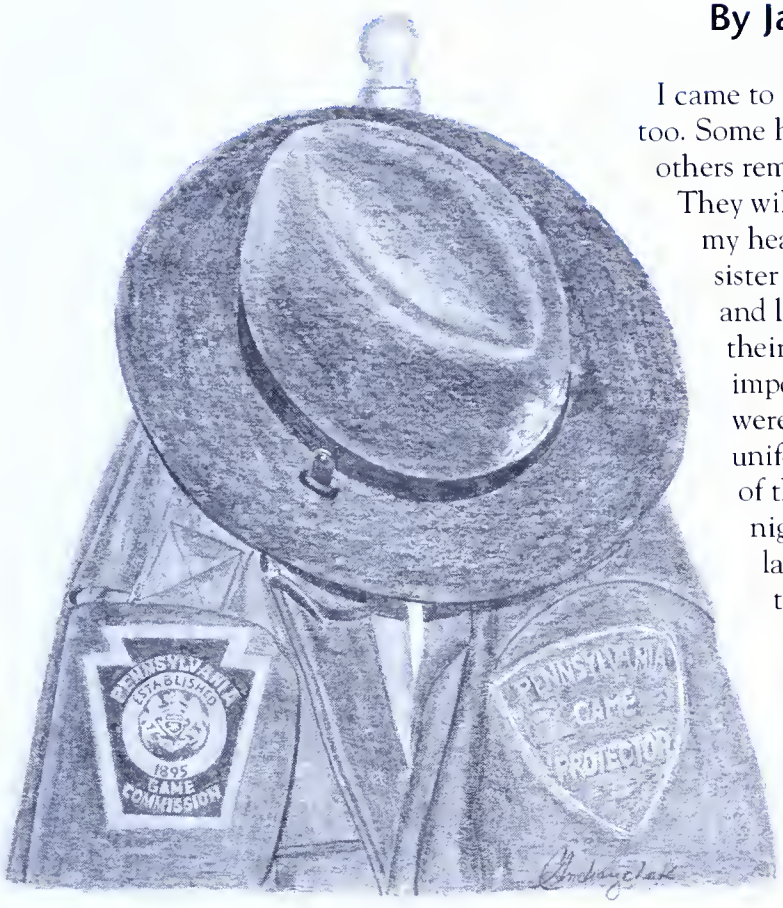
As we talked I sensed he enjoyed more than just shooting geese. He talked about ducks and geese, but also about enjoying days afield, about being a witness and participant in the natural world. He talked about other hunts and a particular day when everything came together. The water, the geese, the weather and the wind had all cooperated. His words and the gleam in his eyes told of one special day.

I have to thank that goose hunter. It was the way his eyes glistened as he spoke about that perfect day that sent me toward the distant hillside. It was his words and the gleam in his eyes that allowed me to ignore the darkening skies and instead pour a small charge of powder into the priming pan, pull up my collar and walk toward the distant thickets.

I thank him now for sending me to the thicket where the impending rain moved a buck from its bed. To the trail where the buck and I crossed paths with just enough dry powder in the pan to send the ball on its way. I want to thank the goose hunter I met that day when the buck stumbled and fell only moments before the rain began in earnest and drenched everything in sight. I wish the goose hunter was there when I pulled the buck through the game lands parking lot.

I know I may never be able to pass along my heartfelt thanks to that goose hunter, but I may be able do to one better. Instead, I will pay my debt to another hunter. Someday I'll meet him on a faraway ridge, in the hush of the forest, and talk of this hunt and this buck. I'll talk of the long days with few tracks and no deer that came before, but then I'll tell of the driving rain that day in the thicket and of the buck. And if the other hunter looks into my eyes he will see that golden day when the hunt was perfect. If that happens, and he ventures forth with new enthusiasm and renewed vigor, I will have thanked the goose hunter and all the hunters whose eyes pass along those golden moments to fellow hunters in need of a reason to walk another mile toward some distant hill. □

Diamonds and WCOs



By Janey Stoner

AS I QUIETLY make my way through the woods, with the sunlight filtering through the limbs, "diamonds" fall from the sky and pile up at my feet. It's a beautiful winter day, reminding me of days spent as a child with my father when he was a "game warden."

The manmade lakes at Middle Creek then were froze over, with bare trees sticking out of them. Visiting the game lands buildings was always an adventure. The Food and Cover crew guys were a welcome, friendly bunch, and the smells of beaver and fox hides were intoxicating.

I came to know many deputies, too. Some have passed away and others remain family friends. They will always remain in my heart. They teased my sister and me unmercifully, and loved us as if we were their own. What an important family they were to us. Whether in uniform in the wee hours of the morning or late at night, there was always laughter and fun and the uncompromising dedication and loyalty to the Game Commission and their supervising officers.

There are certain times in your life as a child when you just feel important, no matter if it's warranted or not. For me, answering the phone and talking on the Game Commission radio did that. I can clearly remember some of the code language and how thrilling when "931" answered me, "93X back." In those days the wife and children were far more involved in the duties of an officer, and I feel qualified in saying that, as I am the proud daughter of a retired game warden and the wife of a current WCO.

While the diamonds are pelting me in the face and my toes are

wondering where the warmth has gone, I'm in a surreal remembrance of time gone by. The spring and summer months were not as hectic for Dad, but they sure were a bushel of fun. Accompanying Dad while lakes were being cleared, I can still see him hollering and grabbing all at the same time to save toes from the hungry cutter. To this day I am leery of muddy holes and big turtles.



Another part of my dad's job was being assigned WCO trainees. Trainees were present at times over the years, and all learned valuable lessons. Friendships were formed and have been long lasting. As of yet, my husband and I have not had a trainee, but perhaps one day we will.

Being the wife of a WCO is much different, but most things in life do change as time goes by. Through my child eyes, it was so easy to see all the fun and forget about all the hard work. When my husband was a new WCO, it was tough going. As the daughter, I was not as aware of the stresses of the job. After the first harassment call and many nights of wondering just when my husband was going to return safely, the explosion of reality set in.

I can only hope our three girls will come to appreciate and respect the woods like my husband and I do. Already, our oldest daughter has experienced hunting, and the love of nature has been rooted. Life has a funny way of repeating itself — in this case a long-lasting lesson.

The diamonds are still falling and the path is now thick with snow. I continue to walk and reminisce about the life of a game warden. I am reminded of the grueling process both my father and husband went through to enter and graduate from the training school.

Dad is retired now, and my husband has been a WCO for quite a few years. The lives of the men and women who choose this career are enriched every day, but also they enrich the lives of their deputies, families and the public.

The day is almost over and the snow diamonds are gleaming and illuminating the path. My heart is full of gratitude for knowing such fine deputies and WCOs over the years. Quietly, I make my way home. □

FIELD NOTES

Reasons for Everything

CHESTER — I recently read an article about an imported oak tree that had been sent to Penn State for study. As it turned out the tree had a disease, which is currently killing oaks on the West Coast. Just think that if that tree had been sent to a homeowner or nursery, the disease could have easily been spread to our state's forests. Now, suppose that the tree had been a captive bred wild or exotic animal that was sent without regard for acquiring the proper permits or making sure the animal had veterinarian records. The consequences could be devastating. Think about this when you see news articles criticizing the Game Commission for confiscating illegally imported/possessed wild or exotic animals. It's you, the public, and our wildlife we are protecting.

— WCO SCOTT S. FREDERICK, SADSBURYVILLE

Steeler Fans?

ALLEGHENY — I was driving into Pittsburgh on the Parkway West when I noticed some deer near the Fort Pitt Tunnels. They were on the cliff above the west entrance to the tunnel, and I was able to stop and photograph a mature doe with triplet fawns. The deer in the Steel City are not only surviving, they're thriving.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Paying Off

DAUPHIN — Through archery season Peters Mountain, which comprises much of SGL 211, had yielded five bucks that I know about that had eight or more points. Two 8-points were taken by archers, two 8-points were killed by poachers and one 10-point was hit by a car in Clark's Valley. It seems antler restrictions are working.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN



Training for the Olympics?

ERIE — In September Jefferson County WCO Mike Girosky and I went fishing in Lake Erie. When we were two miles out, in 38 feet of water, I noticed something in the water ahead of us. I turned my boat to avoid what I thought was a log but was amazed to see a 6-point buck swimming toward the shore. When we reached the area we wanted to fish I mentioned the sighting to another boater, who said that he passed the deer swimming at about four miles out.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Popular

SULLIVAN — People often tell me how much they enjoy reading Field Notes, even one lady while I was on the table, donating blood.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

What Are the Odds?

LANCASTER — I was able to prosecute an individual for dumping a microwave on game lands, because an envelope with his name and address on it was clinging to the back of the appliance. Ironically, the envelope had been mailed to the person from the Game Commission.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

Disaster in the Making

INDIANA — Deputy Tom Kowaleski and I noticed the lights of a stopped vehicle in the distance and a strange bright spot of light beneath it. We pulled in behind the car and saw a young man with a lit highway flare lying under his car. After identifying myself, I instructed him to get away from the vehicle. He crawled out and dropped the flare. Once he was safe I asked what he was doing. He said he had hit some bumps in the road and thought he might have ruptured his gas tank. After a glance at my partner, who couldn't even speak, I said, "Son, I'm sure you don't have a gas leak. If you had, neither you nor your car would be here right now." He mentioned that he didn't have a flashlight and knew it would be dangerous to drive with a gas leak.

— DEPUTY BILL STAFFEN, INDIANA

Determination

LEHIGH — I had to stop my vehicle suddenly to avoid hitting a doe that had run onto the road, and then I watched the doe run up over an embankment on the other side. Seconds later a buck followed, nose to the ground, and he ran right into the embankment, fell backwards, got up, shook himself off, and then continued his pursuit of the doe.

— DEPUTY WHITEY LERCH, COOPERSBURG

Couldn't Do it Without You

JEFFERSON — I would like to thank the Brockway Sportsmen's Club, Heath Township Sportsmen's Club, Pinecreek Sportsmen's Club, Sigel Sportsmen's Club, Warsaw Sportsmen's Club and the Brookville Masonic Lodge. Each of these organizations sponsors HTE classes, providing the use of facilities and lunch at no cost to students. Without such generosity from volunteers, the Game Commission would find it extremely difficult to provide this mandatory training. So, on behalf of all the instructors, students, parents and the Game Commission, thank you.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Good Advice

CRAWFORD — If you plan on trapping this season don't hesitate to contact your local WCO for suggestions on where to go. Many landowners are more than accommodating when it comes to helping trappers. Also, let the landowner and/or your local WCO know the number of animals removed from the area. Good luck, and may your traps be filled each day.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Wrong Answer

LEHIGH — I received information about a turkey that had been taken illegally, so Deputy Lerch and I gathered evidence and then made a call on the suspect. The suspect invited us into his house and admitted to shooting the turkey. We smelled a delicious aroma coming from the kitchen, and after asking where the turkey was, the man took the lid off the crockpot. I said it smelled like turkey and the man said, "yep." I told him he'd now have to take his wife out to dinner.

— WCO M.P. TEEHAN, FOGELSVILLE



Bears Galore

INDIANA — Michelle Behune was amazed to see a female bear with five cubs cross the road in front of her vehicle. I think she was even more surprised to learn that it isn't that uncommon for bears in our area to have five cubs.

— WCO PATRICK SNICKLES, MARION CENTER

They're Back

VENANGO — WCO Thomas Tarkowski, Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Dan Johnson and I noticed five bald eagles along the Allegheny River.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, FRANKLIN



Uh-Oh

UNION — After entering through a gate and checking hunters on some game lands, Deputy Tilghman Smith and I were leaving the tract through a different gate when Tilghman got out to open the heavy wooden structure. After driving through I noticed a perplexed look on his face, and when he got back to the vehicle holding up his hands I realized why. It seems the gate had just been painted by the Food & Cover crew.

— WCO DIRK REMENSNYDER, MIFFLINBURG

Great News

On September 23, 2004, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation harvested chestnuts from two trees on SGL 228 in Somerset County. These trees are native American chestnuts that have resisted the blight and were cross-pollinated with Chinese chestnuts last spring. The resulting chestnuts will be used in the Foundation's efforts to develop a blight-resistant native American chestnut that can be reintroduced into Pennsylvania forests. Reels Corner native Tom Pugal has been involved in the Chestnut Foundation's efforts in this area.

— LMO SCOTT W. TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN

Easy Pickins'

ARMSTRONG — The heavy rains and flooding in September had some interesting impacts on wildlife. I noticed deer evacuating low lying areas, and watched five gobblers casually dining in a hay field on crickets and grasshoppers that were slowed down by the heavy rain.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, RURAL VALLEY

Mystery

BERKS — Waterfowl decoy carver Dave Kuhns was duck hunting on opening day when he dropped a mallard. While wading out to retrieve his bird, though, a black lab dove into the water and grabbed his duck. No problem, he thought. He would find the hunter that the dog belonged to and get his bird. The only trouble was that there were no other hunters, and the dog had just disappeared, along with his duck.

— DEPUTY LARRY GALLAGHER, HAMBURG

Coincidence?

POTTER — Coudersport resident Dave Mast said he's been seeing a fisher near his residence on Fisher Drive. He asked me if fishers can read.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT



Invite

CRAWFORD — Nuisance beaver calls are at an all time high in my district, so many landowners will welcome trappers on their property. Also, beavers no longer need to be tagged, as in the past.

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE



Eye to Eye

BEDFORD — When Deputy Norb Gibney heard something on his back porch, he looked out the window and spotted a bear that had just torn down his hummingbird feeder. Norb watched as the bear lapped up the sweet nectar and then disappeared. He opened the door a crack to see if he could see the bear, and then stuck his head out to see in the other direction. To his surprise, the bear was standing on its hind legs looking in the window of the door.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Popular Pastime

PERRY — Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross joined me on night patrol, in an area heavily used by recreational spotlighters. A constant stream of spotlighters passed through the area until 11 p.m., when spotlighting must cease, prompting Mr. Ross to comment, "This 'spotlighting Super Bowl' certainly illustrates how people in Perry County enjoy viewing wildlife."

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Shaking 'Em Out

MONTGOMERY — Deputy Kurt Minnicks saw a red-tailed hawk actually hopping up and down on a squirrel's nest until the concealed bushytails fled their sanctuary. The cagy hawk then proceeded to pick off one of the fleeing squirrels.

— WCO TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, FREDERICK

Some Things Never Change

INDIANA — Years ago WCO Barry Seth wrote a Field Note that stuck in my memory. Barry mentioned that WCO really stood for Wildlife Clerical Officer, due to the amount of paperwork required. Today, with computers, you'd think there would be less paperwork. In actuality, it seems to have increased.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Busy

The Food and Cover crews in Forest and Warren counties do a considerable amount of work on the Allegheny National Forest. Here is a list of some of their accomplishments over the past year: 41 acres of grain planted, 37 acres of grasses/legumes planted, 533 acres mowed, 31 miles of vegetated roads mowed, 69 acres limed, 111 acres fertilized, 6 acres of border cuts, 9 fruit trees pruned, 28 brush piles constructed, 24 miles of roads maintained, 18 parking areas maintained, 71 dams/dikes maintained, 152 waterfowl nesting structures maintained, 6 miles of propagation area boundary marked, 4 large wooden signs maintained, 8 gates maintained, 19 culvert pipes maintained and 60 smaller signs posted. All lime, seed and fertilizer is supplied by the ANF, as well as the diesel fuel for the tractors.

—LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Brought Back Memories

FOREST — Neighboring WCO Dustin Stoner called for help processing a mother bear and three cubs. When I arrived Dustin and his deputies were trying to tranquilize four bears in two separate culvert traps, which is no small feat. As I watched Dustin going from one bear to the next with his syringe and listening to his deputies calling for him, I had to chuckle, thinking about my days as an RN in the Emergency Room. Welcome to the Emergency Room; one nurse, four patients, and they all want you immediately.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, MARIENVILLE

Rest Assured

WAYNE — Vincent Sciandra, manager of the Dunkin Donuts in Honesdale, would like me to tell the people that were in the "drive through," watching him dig donuts out of the dumpster and taking them to the back door of the store, that the donuts were for my bear trap, not to resell. Thanks for the donuts, Vince.

— WCO JAMES P. MCCARTHY, WAYMART

What It's All About

BUTLER — "When can we do it again, Dad?" my son Cody asked after we had just finished hunting during the Youth Waterfowl Hunt Day. When a wood duck landed in our decoy spread I instructed Cody to stand up and shoot after the duck flushed. He did as instructed, but the duck wouldn't fly and just swam off, and no shots were fired. When he looked at me, I told him it's legal to shoot at ducks on the water, but he looked directly into my eyes and replied, "That just wouldn't be fair."

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

What Goes Around ...

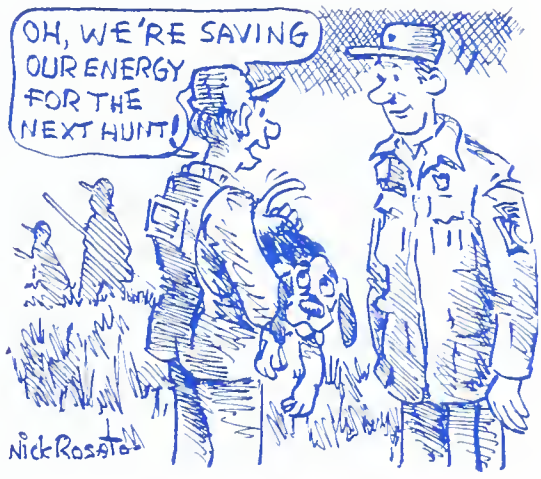
MERCER — Having a dependable neighboring officer only a radio or phone call away is invaluable. With WCO Jim Donatelli and I sharing Mercer County, it's more of a mutual aid agreement that involves not just law enforcement, but occasionally roadside assistance. I recently received a cell phone call from Jim, who wanted to know where I was and if I had a tow chain. It seems he had been checking out a nuisance beaver area when he got his truck stuck. I arrived with my camera at the ready (those pictures may be worth something) and a tow chain. The landowner and another neighbor at the site ("Becky's Bottom") wondered if this might make a Field Note. Eventually I was able to pull the truck free from the swamp, and a lot of good-natured ribbing was the only cost incurred. With our track record, though, I know there will be a payback some day.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Who's the Real Star?

GREENE — I bumped into a young man who remembered me from a program I had done at his school and was quite happy to hear him tell his parents that my program was really cool. Knowing how hard it is to get the attention of kids today, let alone them remembering you, I was feeling quite smug. When his parents asked him who I was he said, "He's the animal guy."

— WCO RANDY R. CRAGO, CARMICHAELS



Mutual Benefit

ELK — During a mentored hunt on one of the Youth Pheasant Hunt days some of the area's best dogs and dog handlers turned out to make the hunt the best it could be for the youngsters. After an enjoyable and successful hunt one of the dogs learned that if she stretched her legs out in a pleading manner the youngsters would pick her up and carry her around like a baby, at least until it was time to get back to the hunt.

— WCO DICK BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Oops!

WESTMORELAND — Several of my dedicated deputies and I discovered an individual during archery season occupying a treestand near a salt block. When asked if he knew the salt was there he replied, "Yes, but I didn't put it there. I had apples there until about a month ago, though."

— WCO RODNEY ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

Hunters enjoy a great elk season

DURING OUR fourth modern-day elk season, November 8-13, 34 elk (12 antlered and 22 antlerless) were taken among the 40 hunters awarded elk licenses for the hunt.

"Elk are one of North America's premier big game animals," said Vern Ross, Pennsylvania Game Commission executive director. "Pennsylvania is privileged to offer this tremendous opportunity, which is important in showcasing our state's rich hunting heritage."

The elk license allocation for the 2004 elk hunt was designed to scale back the number of licenses and focus hunter pressure on units where landowners continue to face conflicts with elk.

The allocation also was set to allow the herd to grow in those elk management areas where there is adequate habitat and where conflicts are minimal.

In 2003, the 100 licensed hunters took 18 antlered and 50 antlerless elk. In 2002, 70 licensed hunters took 32 antlered elk and 29 antlerless elk. In 2001, in the state's first modern-day elk hunt, 30 licensed hunters took 14 antlered and 13 antlerless elk.

The heaviest elk was an 806-pound 7x7 taken by Harmon Silloway, 39, of Mercer County. He took his trophy at 7 a.m. on Nov. 8, in Elk Management Area 9.

The bull with the largest rack was a 9x8 taken by Timothy Harvey, 34, of Westmoreland County. He took the 753-pound bull at 7:10 a.m. on Nov. 8, in Elk Management Area 10.

The heaviest antlerless elk was a 606-pounder taken by Mark Peet, 41, of Tioga County. He took his trophy at 4 p.m. on Nov. 10, in Elk Management Area 3.

The 40 hunters for this year's hunt were selected from more than 22,750 entrants.

Pending a review of harvest and population data, agency staff will make recommendations for the 2005 elk hunt at the January meeting of the Board of Game Commissioners.

DMAP reports accepted online

Under the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) all hunters who obtained DMAP permits are required to submit a harvest report card, even if they did not take a deer. This requirement will enable the Game Commission to fully measure the effectiveness of the program, which is designed to address specific deer management objectives within the new wildlife management units. All reports must be submitted by Feb. 8, 2005.

To make DMAP reporting as easy as possible, beginning in October the Game Commission began accepting DMAP harvest report information online.

"It was very easy to fill in because of the drop down menus, and it was very quick and efficient," said Kevin

Zepp, Altoona, the first person to use the online reporting system. Using his DMAP permit, Zepp took an antlerless deer with a muzzleloader on Saturday, Oct. 16, and filed his online harvest report on Oct. 19.

To file a DMAP antlerless deer harvest report online, hunters should go to the Game Commission's website www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "DMAP" in the "Quick Clicks" box in the upper right hand corner of the homepage, and then click on the underlined portion of the opening paragraph.

Hunters will need to fill in their application number, DMAP unit number, coupon number, and birth date; the date of the harvest; the Wildlife Management Unit, county and township of the harvest; and what type of sporting arm they used. DMAP permits may be used to take only antlerless deer, however hunters still will need to identify whether the antlerless deer was male or female. Hunters with DMAP permits who did not harvest a deer need to report, too, and may do so simply by checking a box at this site.

"DMAP enables public and private landowners to address deer management goals on a localized basis," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "DMAP is designed to provide landowners more flexibility in managing deer populations on their properties. By doing so, we hope to improve deer management and lessen deer impacts on agricultural crops and forest regeneration."

Ross noted that hunters may not file any other type of harvest reports online, because state law requires that all harvest report cards for deer and turkey be submitted to the Game Commission through the mail. However, House Bill 2326, sponsored by Rep. Keith Gillespie (R-York), was enacted this past November, and it allows the Game Commission to establish other methods of reporting harvests. This clears the way for all harvest reporting information to be submitted online or by calling a toll-free telephone number, as well as by mail for those hunters without access to a computer or telephone, once the agency develops the systems to accept these forms of reporting.

"With this law, the Game Commission will make reporting a harvest more convenient for hunters, which, in turn, may improve reporting rates," Ross said. "In addition, the new process promises to reduce our costs of having harvest report card information data entered, and nearly eliminates the money we spend on postage for the current harvest report card system."

Ross noted that the agency spends about $150,000 annually to cover postage and handling of harvest report cards for deer and turkey.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299
Southwest — 1-877-877-7137
Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674
Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107
Northeast — 1-877-877-9357
Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

PGC Retirees



Lawrence D. Haynes
Game Conservation Officer
Gettysburg
7/9/77 - 6/29/04



David H. Breese
Game Lands Main. Worker
Montrose
1/5/71 - 5/7/04



Jerry L. Black
Game Lands Main. Worker
Lake Ariel
6/8/70 - 6/18/04



Mark W. Kasten
Game Lands Main. Supervisor
Hallstead
6/17/69 - 6/18/04



Daniel E. Marks
Game Conservation Officer Supervisor
Montoursville
6/26/73 - 6/18/04



Timothy O. Bowers
Game Lands Main. Supervisor
Dillsburg
9/2/75 - 6/18/04



Robert D. Buss
Game Conservation Officer
Lords Valley
3/25/72 - 3/26/04



Richard E. Walton
Dispatcher
Wilkes-Barre
6/1/88 - 6/18/04



Darryl R. Dunkelberger
Surveyor
Sinking Spring
6/26/67 - 6/18/04



Patrick M. Donahue
Forester
Drums
8/2/69 - 6/18/04



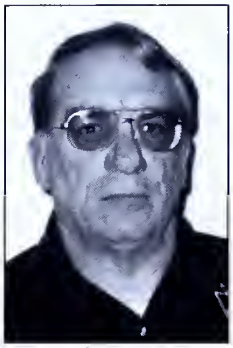
Richard E. Karper
Game Conservation Officer
York Springs
6/5/88 - 1/30/04



James G. Bowers
Howard Nursery Superintendent
Howard
3/28/70 - 6/18/04



Charles J. Arcovitch
Game Conservation Officer
Union Dale
7/9/77 - 1/2/04



Daniel O. Brown
Game Lands Main. Supervisor
Worthington
1/7/64 - 12/19/03



Ronald S. Matolyak
Forester
Bedford
7/29/69 - 6/18/04



Johnnie G. Corle
Game Lands Main. Worker
Hopewell
3/1/93 - 6/18/04



Roman J. Stadler, Jr.
Game Lands Main. Worker
Erie
10/2/62 - 3/26/04



Richard W. Polley, Sr.
Game Lands Main. Supervisor
Jamestown
6/18/85 - 6/18/04



C. Clair Souter
Game Farm Superintendent
Montoursville
9/24/79 - 4/9/04



James M. Kazakavage
Acting Training Director
Ross Leffler School
Middletown
3/25/68 - 4/23/04



Sandra M. Hess
Personnel Analyst
Littlestown
3/3/70 - 6/29/04

ALSO RETIRING were William L. Amick, Forester, Lanse, 6/3/69-6/25/04; Paul E. Confer Jr., Forester, Howard, 8/2/69-6/18/04; Rickie D. Hixson, Game Land Management Group Supervisor, Beech Creek, 7/12/75-6/29/04; Alan E. Keister, Wildlife Technician, Noxen, 6/5/82-6/18/04; George Kelly, Wildlife Biologist, Spring Mills, 7/17/95-6/18/04; Andrew G. Sember, Forester, Jersey Shore, 4/24/71-6/18/04; Michael R. Shaffer, Forester, New Enterprise, 1/28/69-3/26/04; Perry W. Shipman, Wildlife Maintenance Propagator, Williamsport, 7/29/74-2/27/04; Gay J. Sterner, Administrative Assistant, Shermansdale, 10/2/78-4/9/04; Robert S. Truax, Equipment Operator, Somerset, 6/1/88-6/18/04; Clay G. VanBuskirk, Game Land Officer Manager, Millerstown, 7/9/77-6/18/04; F. Bruce Whitman, Information Manager, Driftwood, 6/10/91-2/27/04; Thomas C. Wylie, Administrative Officer, Harrisburg, 3/29/65-9/24/04.



David Myers
Game Conservation Officer
Linesville
3/27/72-12/31/04

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

North Dakota

Hunters took 20,220 cottontail rabbits in 2003, an 18 percent increase from the 16,946 taken in 2002. Although the kill per hunter remained at 4.8, the number of hunters was up from 3,531 in 2002 to 4,175 in 2003.

Georgia

There were 484,000 deer (188,000 antlered, 296,000 antlerless) taken by 304,310 hunters during the 2003-04 season. The average hunter hunted 21 days for deer and took about 13 days to harvest an animal.

Online Hunter Education Courses

According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, an increasing number of states are using online hunter education courses. All states require prospective hunters to complete coursework in safety, conservation, ethics and more. Sixteen to 18 hours are typically spent in weekend or evening classes before a hunting license can be obtained. However, the online course is available anytime, can be completed at a student's own pace, and is readily accessible to newcomers seeking certification, as well as veteran hunters just brushing up on basics. By the end of 2004, 25 states had adopted the online program in some form, and by the end of 2005 all 50 states are expected to have fully evaluated it. Most states will still require a one-day field class, but the bulk of the coursework can be done at home, rather than attending class during three or four consecutive weeknights or during weekends.

Kentucky

Hunters took a record 116,450 deer in 2003, including 43 bucks that qualified for listing in the Boone & Crockett Club trophy records.

Michigan

There was an average of 173 deer/vehicle collisions a day in 2002, costing $130 million in vehicle repairs.

South Carolina

Hunters bagged 273,504 deer, including 135,797 antlered deer, in 2003, which is down 14.5 percent from the record harvest of 319,902 in 2002. After many years of rapid increase, the deer population in the state has been relatively stable since the mid-1990s. Food availability and warm weather making for tough hunting were other factors affecting the 2003 harvest. Top counties in harvest during 2003 included Chester, Allendale, Fairfield, Bamberg and Newberry, as each of these counties had harvest rates of more than 20 deer per square mile. There were 125,551 resident and 18,740 nonresident deer hunters in 2003, and overall success was an outstanding 75 percent. Hunters put in an average of 17 days after deer in 2003.

Nevada

With a $25,000 grant, the Department of Wildlife conducted research to identify why hunters become inactive. The three top reasons are: not enough time; not enough game; and lack of places to hunt.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

I subconsciously took stock "just in case," and realized I had carried no flashlight on this "quick drive" and had taken no extra warm clothes on this "we'll be back to the car in an hour" jaunt.

Lost and Found

"DOES ANYBODY know where I am?" I heard the small voice from within my pocket, and put my hand inside to turn up the volume on my 2-way radio.

"What's that?" I asked. "Say that again." I recognized the voice.

"I don't know where I am," came the exasperated reply. "Does anybody else? Where am I?" Then the nervous laugh.

"I'm up on some kind of hill," he continued, "but I shouldn't be here. I mean the hill shouldn't be here. Where are you?"

"I don't know where I am either," I said. "I'm on the edge of the swamp, but I don't know where. I thought the trail was supposed to be to my right, but when I went over there, it wasn't there. I went quite a ways, so I came back down and ran into the swamp. I don't know how to get from the swamp to the car. I don't know how far down along the swamp I am and whether the parking lot is ahead of me or behind me."

I could hear that I was a little breathless, not just from the long explanation, but from plowing through the tall grass and muck. I thought I could see a roadway in the wetland and I tried to walk to it, but when I got closer, I saw the straight line was a beaver dam. So I retreated to drier ground before I got into more wet-footed trouble.

"I'm down by the swamp, too," said a second voice. "I came out to a trail and I'm walking it along a wire. I don't know where it is, but it says Propagation Area. I'm down here along the Propagation Area." That was Joe.

"I wish I was," I answered. I'd been in that section of Buzzard Swamp, in the Allegheny National Forest, before. If I was where Joe was, I'd be "found." I knew how to get from the Propagation Area to the nearest parking lot. It wasn't the parking lot our vehicles were in, but I would radio that I'd stay in the parking area until picked up. Joe had never been there before, so I tried to raise him on the radio to tell him to do just that. I knew that if he left the trail and came my way, he'd run into the swamp again.

"Joe, are you there? Can you hear me, Joe?" No answer.

The day was unseasonably warm for the mid-October muzzleloader season, and it was early afternoon. Plenty of time to get back, and I had a compass. Yet I was uncomfortable. I didn't know exactly where I was, and I didn't know exactly how to get where I wanted to go. I was feeling a

little out of control and I didn't like it.

The five of us had DMAP permits for the Allegheny National Forest, and we had decided this was a good day to try a few pushes in an area we had hunted in the late muzzleloader season last year. Maybe the deer were still there and we'd get lucky with some short pushes.

The strategy sounded simple. Drive up the National Forest access road to a parking area near the swamp. Two of us would walk a path up-drainage, while two walked a trail downstream. We'd cut toward the swamp and return, completing the rectangle. The fifth hunter would take a stand in the middle. We all had hand-held radios and tuned them to the same channel. They would enable us to communicate, so we could decide when to meet back at the parking lot, and help keep us from getting lost: At least we thought they would.

I found out quickly that a radio lets you talk to your buddies, and they can talk to you, but the devices can't tell you where you are or where they are, or how to get from here to there.

"I don't recognize where I am," came the first voice again, my husband Bob. "But I think I'll head northwest. That's where the parking lot should be. I've got my compass."

That surprised me. My husband is out of the "keep the sun on your left shoulder" school of forest navigation. That day the solid cloud cover would have made his usual method of woods direction-finding worthless. I was glad he had pocketed a compass, and I had confidence he would find his way out. I knew I would, too, eventually. I just didn't know where or when.

Buzzard Swamp isn't that big, just big enough to get turned around in. Like most of the places I've been "confused" in the outdoors, its landscape is flat or has small rolls and random humps that seem to lead nowhere. The going is slow because it is either wet or thick, or both.

"I think you should go northwest, too,"



Bob Steiner

THE THICKET along the swamp gave way to spruce, where chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers gawked at my passing, and then to bigger woods. I climbed the hill-that-shouldn't-be-there onto a flat top. Maybe the trail was up there.

Bob said to me from the speaker in my hand. He had heard my nervousness, without my telling him. "Just keep going northwest and you'll get out. I'm going to start walking again," he said. And then he was gone.

Okay, so three of us were "turned around." Len, the one on stand near the parking lot, knew where he was, and my drive-partner, Brian, was "found," too. When we started the push, Brian had been on my right. Then things went bad. Instead of being able to parallel each other, I was pushed into Brian by the boggy terrain. We separated again and I veered left, hiking down the drainage, to put some distance between us. After a while I turned back right, looking for the trail. I walked and walked, but no path. Brian radioed that he had found it and was now at the parking lot. I told him I had just run into a hill that shouldn't have been there and was going left again, to try to get my bearings.

That's when I hit the swamp and heard the "Where am I?" from Bob. Go northwest, hmm? I checked the compass and slung my inline on my shoulder. No way did I want to shoot a deer now, no matter how close and easy the shot. I didn't need another complication. I picked my way out of the swamp into a brushy thicket. That gave way to spruce, where chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers gawked at my passing, and then to bigger woods. I climbed the hill-that-shouldn't-be-there onto a flat top. Maybe the trail was up there. But northwest took me down the other side into a low valley that also had no business existing, with nothing like a trail between.

"I found the trail," came Bob's voice over the radio. "It should take me to the parking lot."

"I haven't found a trail or a logging road," I told him and anyone else listening. "Nothing."

I had toyed with the idea of going back to the swamp and following it up-drainage until I found a landmark I recognized, but the uncertain footing and my having gone so far in the other direction made me drop the notion.

"Keep going northwest," Bob insisted. "That'll take you out."

"OK," I said, knowing the "kay" sounded more like a quivering "ka-a-a-a-y."

Then I was alone again.

Northwest led through the valley and up another unanticipated hill. I hoped there wasn't another swamp between me and wherever I was headed. By then I doubted I would hit the parking lot. I felt I was in the expanse of woods that lay between the end of the lane where we parked and the main National Forest route, a distance of several miles. If I believed my compass and didn't start doing circles, I knew I had to exit onto a road. I subconsciously took stock "just in case," and realized I had carried no flashlight on this "quick drive" and had taken no extra warm clothes on this "we'll be back to the car in an hour" jaunt.

Rarely in the Allegheny National Forest can you walk far without crossing a timber road or oil or gas line, but I seemed to be in one of those rare spots. Finally, I hit the trace of a trail. The narrow, cleared lane was an old oil right-of-way, judging from the rusty pipe that protruded from the ground here and there. The line was going northwest, which was fine by me. I took off at a faster pace.

At last I hit a real trail, a path with a paint blaze. But which way to go? Although neither direction was northwest, I decided a freshly marked trail was a better avenue to follow than a disused oil line. I decided to turn right — it seemed the better direction — and began hiking again.

"Anybody out there?" I called. I got an affirmative from Bob, who by then had found the parking lot and Brian and Len. But not Joe. "I'm on a trail and I'm walking it to the right. It should hit a perimeter road eventually. I'll be waiting where it comes out." Now that I was on a trail, I had confidence. A trail was as good as found.

Even when the path led me nowhere fast, I dismissed the thought of turning around and going the other way. If I did, I doubted I would be any better off. I'd just have wasted hiking time. This was Pennsylvania, not wilderness Alaska, and I would find a road, whether that meant a half mile, one mile, or five miles, and I would sit down and wait.

I was found faster than I thought. I rounded a last bend and there was Len in the path, still on stand, and not far from the parking lot.

"I could hear everyone talking on the radio," he said. "I guess I was the only one who knew where he was, but that didn't help anyone else. I thought of firing a shot, so you could figure which direction you needed to head."

"I thought about asking you to do that," I told him, "but I wasn't that lost yet. It may come to that, though. Joe isn't back yet."

No one had heard from Joe except me, at the very beginning of our lost-and-found

adventures. Bob, Brian, Len and I gathered in the parking area and tried to raise Joe on the radio. No luck. We decided Len would return to his stand, in case Joe appeared on that trail, while Bob and Brian drove around the woods square. They hoped to either find him on the road or get him on the radio at some point. I'd walk back to the last high spot I'd crossed on the trail and try to contact Joe from there.

"Joe, can you hear me, Joe? Can you hear me now?" I would have laughed at unconsciously imitating the guy in the cell phone commercial, but by then I was starting to worry.

Finally Len got an answer.

"Where are you, Joe?" he said.

"I don't know. I crossed a sort of path, but I didn't see any trail markings. Can you ask Brian to give me the GPS coordinates at the parking lot?" Then a pause and Joe answered what I was wondering. "I have my GPS with me, but I didn't put in the coordinates when I left there. I know where I am, but not where I'm supposed to go."

As I walked back, I listened to the radio show, which by then had devolved into a comedy. Len had to be radio middleman. Bob and Brian couldn't talk to Joe, and Joe's radio couldn't reach them. They had to drive the whole way back to the lot to take the coordinates, because Brian hadn't entered them on his GPS, either.

"Ask them to be quick," said Joe. "My radio batteries are going dead, and I don't have spares."

"Brian has the coordinates for you," said Len at last. "Stand by for relay."

I laughed out loud. In his other life, Len is a sergeant in a municipal police force and spends much of his time doing radio communication with the officers.

"I thought you were on vacation. Isn't this what you do all day at work?"

"Yeah, well, you know," Len trailed off. "Joe," he said, all business once again, "coordinates ready for relay. Commencing relay." He relayed them, in all the A-Alpha, B-Bravo, of official-speak. And they got through before Joe's radio died.

"I'm eight-tenths of a mile from the parking area," said Joe, when he had the GPS information punched in. "I'm turning off the radio before the batteries go completely. See you in a few minutes."

Which he did. When I got back to the parking lot, for the second time, I saw that everyone was gathered around a post at the far end, looking at something. I walked up to them and the tide parted, and I saw what was the center of attention — a map. On the post was a map of Buzzard Swamp, complete with a you-are-here orientation marker and a depiction of the trails, ponds, wetlands and the Propagation Area that Joe had found.

If only, if only . . . I could have ticked off the whole escapade's worth of "woulda, shoulda" on all of our parts, from never assume a short outing will turn out that way, to always carry spare batteries, to remember to look for obvious map boards, but decided not to. I had no right to lecture anyone else on woods skills.

Instead I said, "Marienville's nearby. Let's get lunch." □

Cover Painting by Mark Anderson

SOMETIMES you'll spot one on a utility pole line or on a fencepost, but no matter where you see one, they're a neat looking bird of prey with its black cheek patches, bluish wings and brown back. The American kestrel is the smallest raptor in North America. Also known as a "sparrow hawk," the kestrel is not a hawk at all but rather a falcon, and it's more likely to prey on large insects and small rodents than sparrows.

Arctic tundra and grassland breeding birds — horned larks, Lapland longspurs and snow buntings — sometimes winter here, often feeding in manure, on seeds that have passed through the digestive tracts of domestic animals.

Manure Chasing

EVERY WINTER we spend at least one cold day on a manure chase. We hope to find Arctic tundra and grassland breeding birds — specifically horned larks, Lapland longspurs and snow buntings — that sometimes spend their winters in Pennsylvania farm valleys. These seed eating birds feed among fresh manure, because it contains seeds that have passed through the digestive tracts of domestic animals. Otherwise, they glean both weed and domestic seeds from open land.

While horned larks are uncommon breeders in sparse vegetative areas, such as reclaimed strip mines and agricultural fields throughout the commonwealth, snow buntings and Lapland longspurs are strictly Arctic breeding birds. Seeing them is a rare treat. Last winter, though, birders in Lancaster and Northampton counties reported flocks of all three species, and other scattered reports in the state made me hopeful that our own valley would also harbor them.

Yet despite spending a cold winter morning, driving slowly along the back roads of the valley and scanning every harvested cornfield with and without fresh manure, no snow bunting or Lapland longspur could be seen. We did, however, finally spot a flock of horned larks in a cornfield beside the road, and spent many minutes watching them as they ran among the remains of corn stalks, pecking on the windswept, open ground and then flew off together to another field while uttering their *su-weet* calls.

Before they took to the air, however, I was able to study each bird, and all of them had the black sideburns and breast band and yellow throats of horned larks. The "horns," for which they are



named, which are really a pair of tiny, black feathers sometimes erected on the back of their heads, were visible on only a few birds. Otherwise, they had white breasts and bellies and brown backs and wings. No longspurs or buntings had joined that flock. And, in fact, other birders who made regular trips to the valley throughout the season found only horned larks, as well.

The same thing happened the previous winter. We'd joined our local Audubon group for its annual manure chase led by birder expert Dave Kyler. Eleven of us met at the local Grange hall parking lot one Saturday in January. A rosy-fingered dawn had followed a cold, clear, full moonlit night that had glowed with stars, and because it was only three degrees, we all were properly bundled up.

The first bird of the day was a Cooper's hawk in a grove of trees. Next, two red-tailed hawks, which had been routed out by a pair of crows, flew to some trees at the base of the mountain. Other common birds appeared as we drove slowly along — mourning and rock doves, tufted titmice and European starlings. In one small, spring-fed pond, mallards swam. A local hunt club property bristled with hundreds of penned ring-necked pheasants and several more ran loose. Open water in a ditch beside the road hosted a pair of killdeer.



And then, on a freshly manured field lightly covered with powdery snow, we spotted 75 horned larks. Out came the spotting scopes and we all had eye-filling views of them. Kyler told us that while a few horned larks breed in cornfields in the valley, they are practically impossible to see, hence the allure of winter watching.

That, it turned out, was it for our major quarry, although we did have a respectable list by morning's end, including a calling eastern screech-owl, a northern mockingbird and a great blue heron hunched up in the open water of Arch Spring. We'd been so close to it that we could see the muted gray-blue and lilac of its feathers before it slowly straightened up like an arthritic human and flew off. Altogether, we counted 26 species that cold day.

Maybe, I thought, we should have had the howling winds and occasional snow squalls of the January day back in 1981 when our Audubon group braved the five degrees of a Super Bowl Sunday afternoon to look for Arctic birds. Swathed in layers of clothes and fortified by hot drinks, we made several stops at windswept fields before we hit pay dirt. In the midst of a snow squall, our leader's car squealed to a halt. He pointed up at the edge of an immense field. I could barely make out the black specks in the distance that he said were birds — maybe horned larks.

We piled out of our cars and surged up the frozen, uneven furrows of a harvested cornfield. As we neared the edge of the field, a flock of birds rose up in front of us, swirling above our heads in a breathtaking aerial ballet. Snow buntings — at least a hundred of them — flashed their white wing patches against the gray sky. Ahead in the furrows, what looked like a hundred brown mice skittered around in the corn stubble. Through our binoculars, however, they morphed into

horned larks. As we admired them and kept our eyes on the buntings as well, our leader spotted two Lapland longspurs slightly in front of the larks. They had the rusty-colored wing patches and napes of male Lapland longspurs in winter plumage.

Most of us had never seen any of the species before, and despite the piercing cold, we stood watching until we could no longer stand the bitter wind. At a stumbling run, we covered the half mile back to the cars in record time. Not only had we seen Arctic birds, we'd had a fair idea of the weather conditions they endured.

Although Lapland longspurs are often hard to find during eastern North American winters, flocks as large as four million forage on the agricultural fields of the Great Plains from southern Canada to northern Texas. They leave their wintering grounds in late February and early March and arrive at breeding grounds from mid-May until June. Lapland longspurs nest in both the wet meadows and drier slopes of the Arctic tundra across North America and Eurasia. By then the male has donned his flashier black face outlined with white and a reddish-brown collar.

While they are strictly seedeaters in winter, particularly relishing grass, foxtail, cultivated millet, crabgrass and wheat seeds, during breeding season insects make up nearly 50 percent of their diet. They are highly sociable in winter and tolerant of their own species, as well as snow buntings and horned larks on their nesting grounds.

After raising a single brood of three to seven young, they begin their southward migration as early as mid-August, though some remain in the Arctic as late as early November. Here in Pennsylvania peak migration is between the third week of October and November along Lake Erie, and the first or second weeks in December for the rest of the state.

Snow buntings, too, breed in the far north around the world. However, they nest in rock cavities, which provide more protection from nest predators than the open-nesting arctic songbirds such as Lapland longspurs. The males return to their breeding grounds in early April, having traded in their rusty brown and white winter coats for snowy white heads, wings, breasts and bellies and black backs. They immediately begin singing and competing for the best cavity nest sites during the still cold and snowy weather, sometimes suffering huge dieoffs when late storms hit. Four weeks later, when it is warmer and the snow is melting, the females arrive.

Snow buntings are feistier than Lapland longspurs, fighting and bickering continuously among themselves, both on their wintering and breeding grounds, but they, too, are tolerant of other songbirds in their territories, including Lapland longspurs, even though both species feed their young the same foods.

They raise a single brood of three to six young, and leave their nesting grounds by mid- to late-September, although some linger until early November. Immatures, which flock together as soon as they are independent, depart after the adults. The first snow buntings in Pennsylvania are usually spotted the last week in October or first week in November, again along the Lake Erie shoreline. Cold fronts in November and December send them on to more southern parts of the state.

According to McWilliams and Brauning in *The Birds of Pennsylvania*, "flocks in the hundreds or thousands have been recorded in the Glaciated Northwest and Lake Erie Shore during [February and March]." In 1978, they write, 2,000 snow buntings appeared at Harvey's Lake in Luzerne County in mid-February and 3,000 in late February foraged in a sorghum field in northern Berks County.

Both Lapland longspurs and snow buntings occasionally visit birdfeeders next to agricultural areas where they are feeding.

Horned larks are also Holarctic, but they breed from the Arctic south to Mexico, Austria, Hungary and central Asia. They even have outlying populations in Morocco

and Colombia. Although primarily a prairie species, they moved into Pennsylvania from the west in the late 1800s, when most of our forests had been cut and the land cleared for farming.

Horned larks may nest in early March, which allows them to bring off a brood before the fields are cultivated. Safer choices are the abandoned, reclaimed strip-mines in western Pennsylvania, which they were one of the first species to colonize.

They eat mostly seeds but feed their young insects. The female builds a nest in a depression on the bare ground, and two to five young hatch. Horned larks can have as many as three broods in the warmer parts of their range, but they suffer high mortality from agricultural operations in farm fields later in the season. Nonetheless, their numbers appear to be holding steady in much of their worldwide nesting population.

In fact, all three manure-chasing species seem to be thriving, which is good news in a world where many bird species are threatened by habitat loss. Their choice of remote breeding areas and grain-filled wintering sites may keep them abundant, thus guaranteeing that manure chasing will continue to be a fun activity for Pennsylvania birders on cold winter days. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Winter Search

Copy the correct number that coincides with the description of uncommon wintering birds. Pick out the give-away clue for each bird.

____ Commonly seen in hedgerows, and certainly not a king-sized bird. It's smaller than a warbler and its wings flutter constantly.

____ The loud *kuk-kuk* call gives away its presence in woodlands, but it's more often heard than seen, which is strange for such a crow-size bird.

____ Equipped with an unusual bill that is used to crack open pine cones.

____ A long, curved, brown bill allows for easy foraging in tree cavities for this forest dwelling bird.

____ Two tiny black tufts of feathers called "horns" make this year-round resident quite an attraction in snow-covered fields.

____ This open country bird has a red cap and eats dried weed seeds.

1 Horned Lark	2 Pileated Woodpecker	3 Dark-Eyed Junco
4 Kinglet	5 Crossbill	6 Cardinal
7 Brown Creeper	8 Black-Capped Chickadee	9 Redpoll

Circle the three common wintering birds that remain. These should be the species visiting your backyard feeder this winter.

answers on p. 62

Winter doldrums have you down? Check out the . . .

Pa. Spring 3-D Bowhunters Festival

IT'S JANUARY. Our archery deer season is in the 11th hour. The weather is increasingly becoming more and more inhospitable for outdoor activities. Days are short and nights are long. Spring seems an eternity away.

The period from late January through March is perhaps the dullest time of year for those of us who enjoy shooting our bows outdoors. The fall archery deer season is many, many months away. And it's far too cold outside to spend any significant amount of time zipping arrows into targets.

By the end of March, when the weather starts to become bearable, after more than two months of being cooped up in the house, most of the archers I know start to get the itch to take their bows outside for some target shooting. And in the Southeast Region where I live, there's an annual outdoor archery event that's fast becoming known as the first rite of spring.

For the past 11 years, two archery clubs and some Boy Scouts have organized the Pennsylvania Spring 3-D Bowhunters Festival at the J. Edward Mack Scout Reservation near the village of Brickerville on the Lancaster-Lebanon county line. Held the weekend before trout season opens, the festival has become one of the state's largest 3-D shooting events. Organizers bill it as the spring counterpart of the famous Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival held in Forksville, Sullivan County, each September, right before the fall archery deer season begins.

"Some friends and I were at Forksville one year and we got the idea of doing our own event in the spring, when there's not a lot going on," said event co-founder Ken



A YOUNG archer takes aim at a flying turkey target, one of the novelty targets offered at the PA Spring 3-D Bowhunters Festival.



A STANDING BEAR target is just one of the many 3-D targets set up to test an archer's skill.

Fauser of Manheim. "But we wanted ours to be geared more toward target shooting."

The 3-D Bowhunters Festival, which runs Saturday and Sunday, rain or shine, features 120 life-like foam animal targets spread over six different courses. There's also a special 10-target course set up for kids under 13, and a 14-target nighttime course, not to mention a series of novelty targets. And, of course, there are some equipment vendors on hand.

Proceeds from the festival benefit the two organizing archery clubs, Big Buck Archers in Middletown and Big Chiques Bowmen in Elizabethtown, as well as "Camp Mack" — the local name for the scout reservation — and the Boy Scouts of America.

"It's a pretty good moneymaker for all of us," Fauser said. "If it weren't, we probably wouldn't have been able to keep it going this long."

Camp Mack is a 1,009-acre facility owned by the Pennsylvania Dutch Council of the Boy Scouts of America. It's a full-service scouting reservation used by hundreds of scouts each year, who enjoy Camp Mack's swimming pool, canoeing lake, archery and gun ranges and more. When Fauser and his buddies created the spring bowhunters festival 12 years ago, they knew Camp Mack was the perfect place to hold it. With its rolling forested hills, the reservation provides the perfect ambience for an early springtime jaunt in the woods.

"If we didn't have it there, I don't know where else we would have it," Fauser said.

Each year, festival volunteers roll into Camp Mack on Friday, the day before the event begins, to set up 3-D targets on the various courses. Friday is also the day that most of the campers show up. There are a limited number of campsites available for people planning on spending the entire weekend at the festival. Those sites are used both by campers towing trailers and campers using tents. For information on campsites, call Gary Guare at 717-626-5674.

Fauser said the festival draws people from all over Pennsylvania and from most of the surrounding states. As you might imagine, weather is the key factor in determining the

A PAIR of archers take turns shooting at a 3-D target on one of the festival's six courses.





A BEDDED deer is another target set up for the festival. At the conclusion of the festival, targets are auctioned off.

turnout. On a pleasant, warm weekend, more than 1,100 shooters can show up. During years when the weather was less than desirable, as few as 700 have attended.

Shooters can buy one-day tickets to participate, or weekend passes good for both Saturday and Sunday. Tickets allow archers to shoot as many courses as they want, as many times as they want, during the period for which their tickets are valid. Last year, tickets were $14 for Saturday, $12 for Sunday and $22 for the weekend. Fauser said he might increase ticket prices slightly this year to offset a jump in target costs.

Each of the six courses used to have some sort of theme, like the deer course or the African animal course. In recent years, however, Fauser said event organizers scrapped the themes. Now, five of the courses are similar to each other, with a mix of animals, such as deer, bear, boar, elk, turkeys, chamois, African lions, wart hogs, impala, leopards and others. Simply put, you walk through the woods on a marked path and encounter shooting stakes and targets along the way. Shots typically range from 15 to 40 yards.

The sixth course, known as the Hammer Course, has earned an infamous reputation over the years. Fauser said the Hammer Course was set up several years ago to appease shooters who complained that the other courses were not challenging enough. Now, Fauser said, some of those same shooters complain the Hammer is too difficult.

On the Hammer, expect shots at turkeys out to 40 yards. Or, you might have a 50-yard shot at a deer where you have to thread your arrow through a foot-wide gap between two trees. Some targets are nestled among big boulders so that, if you miss, your arrow is destroyed. If you hear a round of thunderous laughs wafting down one of Camp Mack's many valleys, odds are you're hearing the reaction from a crew shooting the Hammer Course.

On Saturday, shooting hours on the stan-



TWO archers climb up to see how well they did and to retrieve their arrows from a 3-D boar target.

dard courses run from dawn to dusk. Beginning at 8 p.m., however, archers can participate in a unique shoot called the 'coon shoot. On the 'coon shoot, 14 3-D raccoon targets, with reflective tacks stuck in their eyes, are set out in the woods. Shooters pair up, so that one person holds a flashlight behind the archer at the shooting line to illuminate the target's eyes. The shooter uses the position of the eyes to figure out where the vitals are located.



SEVERAL archery vendors set up stands during the festival, offering shooters a look at some of the latest gear in target shooting and bowhunting.

Another Saturday staple is the bowhunting equipment auction. Fauser rounds up loads of gear donated by manufacturers for the Saturday evening event. The assortment of equipment typically includes treestands, arrows, clothing and much more.

On Sunday, shooting on the standard courses resumes at dawn and continues to 3:30 p.m. Aside from the courses, attendees can also shoot novelty targets. An extra fee is charged to shoot these targets, and prizes are awarded by lottery drawing to shooters who hit the bullseye on the novelties. There's a flying turkey target, featuring a foam turkey that's hurled through the air in a circular pattern by a motor-driven, spinning pole. There's also a giant 3-D cobra snake that spins around in a circle. The bullseye is a small mark on the snake's neck. You have to time the spin just right to get your arrow into that mark.

Another novelty target is the full-size bull moose placed as far as 70 yards from the shooting line. You have to hit the heart to put your name in the bucket for the prize drawing. One of the most popular novelties is Robo Deer. This is a deer-shaped target made of solid steel, except for a small hole where the deer's heart would be. Robo Deer is placed in front of a hay bale and archers try to shoot through the heart. If you miss the heart, you destroy your arrow.

Another traditional Sunday activity is the end-of-shoot target auction. At 5 p.m. Sunday, all of the targets used during the weekend are auctioned off to the highest bidders. Believe it or not, despite a full weekend of constant use, most of the targets are still in pretty good shape by the time they're auctioned off. Targets that originally cost more than $300, can become bargains for sharp bidders.

So if you find yourself hankering to get outside with your bow and fling some arrows at 3-D targets this spring, plan a trip to the Pennsylvania Spring 3-D Bowhunters Festival. It's the perfect medicine for curing the winter blues.

For more information on the festival, including directions to Camp Mack, call Fauser at 717-664-3046. □

By Jim Romanelli

The Versatile .22 Long Rifle

WHENEVER SPORTSMEN gather around the cracker barrel and start discussing firearms and ammunition, the banter usually centers around centerfire cartridges. But if we were to look at the most popular cartridge sold and shot over the past century, it would be about the least discussed and debated of all, the .22 Long Rifle.

When the Long Rifle started out, in 1887, it was loaded with 5 grains of black powder behind a 40-grain bullet, and it became one of the few black powder cartridges that successfully graduated into the smokeless era. (The .22 Short is the oldest "existing" rimfire, which came out in 1857, and the .22 Long came out in 1871.)

Over the years, the .22 Long Rifle has become the most popular training, plinking, hunting and target round in the history of cartridge ammunition. The light report, nonexistent recoil and low cost have all accounted for the selling of more than 3 billion .22 Long Rifle rounds every year. (Yes, you read that amount right.) Furthermore, today, just between Remington, Winchester, Federal and CCI, there are more than 30 different Long Rifle loads available, from shotshell to hyper velocity rounds.

The shotshell is loaded with #12 shot, and can be effective on small pests out to about 10 to 15 feet. They are just the thing when you don't want to be shooting holes through the barn or any of its contents, and there isn't much concern when it comes to ricochets.

Many firearm companies even built smoothbore .22 rifles, which threw a more effective pattern of the shotshell than the rifled bore. These were popular up until the 1960s, and were just the ticket for the farmer, trick shooter, and a facsimile type of skeet called "Mo-Skeet." The demand for smoothbore .22s has fallen to where few companies offer them now.

The .22's lead bullets range from 29 to 40 grains and fly from under 1,100 fps (subsonic) to about 1,700 fps (hyper velocity). Muzzle energy runs from under 100 ft. lbs. to 200 ft. lbs, and with a 50-yard zero, midrange trajectories



For testing various .22 Long Rifle cartridges ROMANELLI used a Model 1912 Anschutz with a Bushnell 6-18x scope and a Ruger Model 10/22 Mannlicher with a Bushnell Banner 1.5-4.5x scope.

(depending on velocity) can vary from about 3 inches to more than 8 inches at 100 yards.

At times, when the report from a standard Long Rifle might cause a little too much attention, some of the subsonics are quiet enough out of a rifle to where you might barely hear more than the hammer hitting the firing pin. The sub-sonics are accurate enough for close range pest control (out to about 50 yards) and, really, the only detriment to the sub-sonics is that most will not cycle a semi-auto firearm, which is not a major concern for Pennsylvania hunters.

As for accuracy, with standard velocity ammunition and a typical sporter type rifle, 1-inch groups at 50 yards can be expected. High velocity ammo may not be quite as accurate, but for hunting purposes it's fine. With a high grade target rifle and carefully chosen target ammo, a good shooter can shoot 1-inch or better groups at 100 yards.

Actually, several big bore competitors I compete with in the CMP (Civilian Marksmanship Program) matches, also practice and compete with the .22 Long Rifle at 100 and 200 yards. This greatly sharpens their ability in holding steady and doping the wind when competing in the 1,000-yard big bore matches.

When I was introduced to this form of competition, the accuracy of the .22 was a real eye opener. What I thought to be a 50- to 75-yard cartridge actually performs surprisingly well out to 200 yards. With the Long Rifle's slow, arching trajectory of its 40-grain bullet, any shooter can learn a great deal about wind drift, for example, and about the effects of "canting," tilting your rifle's sights/scope in relation to the axis of the bore.

For most of us, when we want to just go out and have a little fun, we head to our local sporting good store and pick up a box of the least expensive brand of .22 Long Rifle ammunition we can find. But how many of us actually realize that there is as much of a difference in the performance among various brands of .22 L.R. ammo as there is with different brands of any particular centerfire cartridge.

Depending on what purpose and performance level you want, there are several types of .22 L.R. cartridges to choose from, such as match/target velocity, standard velocity, high velocity and hyper velocity rounds. As you might imagine, price for a box of 50 rounds also varies, from about $1 to $16.

With that thought in mind, I wanted to find out what kind of performance differences there really are among different types of ammo. For my test I picked up 10 brands of Long Rifle ammo and set up targets at 50, 100 and 200 yards.

Knowing that the vast majority of .22 rimfire shooters use standard, off the shelf rifles, I decided to go the same route and borrowed a Ruger 10/22 stainless Mannlicher with a Bushnell Banner 1.5-4x32 scope. I pulled a bore snake through it, applied a touch of powdered graphite in the friction areas, and made sure that the barrel retaining screws, as well as the take down screw, were all tight.

The ramp of the magazine was polished, so the bullet wouldn't be scored as it was pushed by the breech block on its way into the chamber. Also, because a heavy, creepy trigger pull is never conducive to good accuracy, the 8-pound pull was cut down to a crisp 3.5 pounds. (Unless you are intimately familiar with the workings of a trigger mechanism, have any sort of adjustments done only by a qualified gunsmith).

It was a pleasant surprise, to say the least, when the Ruger at 50 yards, shot all brands into an inch or less, and several brands cut half-inch groups. In moving out to 100 yards the standard velocity (1,100 fps) brands dropped approximately 6

Fun Game answers:

4, 2, 5, 7, 1, 9.
Feeder Birds: 3, 6, 8.

inches. The high speed velocity (1,200+ fps) dropped about 4 inches, and the Hyper Velocity (1,400 to 1,600 fps) dropped less than 3 inches.

My best groups with the Ruger at 100 yards ran just inside one inch with PMC Zappers (1,250 fps) and the Remington Target (1,050 fps). The Remington Yellow Jackets (1,450 fps) went to 1 7/16-inch and the Remington Hi Speed (1,178 fps) grouped at 1¼-inch. The Federal Gold (1,053 fps) also cut 1¼-inch and most others were near the 2-inch mark.

For further comparison, I used my match Anschutz Model 1912 with a Bushnell 6-18x scope, and with Federal Gold Match 900B ammunition off the bench, it consistently shot 5-round groups between 1/2- and 3/4-inch (counting the flyers) at 100 yards.

Generally, if match ammunition is not used in match grade firearms, its accuracy will be good, but not great. It's the combination of match ammunition along with a match grade chamber and rifling that makes for outstanding accuracy.

Whether it's a high grade target rifle or an off the shelf sporter, the shooter needs to test as many different kinds of ammo as he can to find the one or ones that work best in that particular firearm. Just as important as finding the ammo that shoots most accurately in your rifle, is how you clean it to maintain that level of accuracy.

Throughout my years of competing, and in talking to other competitors and manufactures of match .22 L.R. firearms and parts, I have learned that rimfire barrels should not be cleaned anywhere near as often, or as vigorously, or even in some of the same ways as centerfire rifles.

In talking to Tony Kidd of Kidd Innovative Design (which makes match barrels and competition triggers), he said that since the .22 L.R. bullet is only a piece of lubricated soft lead going at a fairly slow speed, minimal cleaning of a barrel is one of the best ways to preserve its accuracy.

About the only part of the barrel that should get cleaned regularly is the chamber, with a Q-TIP soaked with solvent and then wiped clean, and that's only when chambering or extracting a cartridge gets a little sticky (especially in match grade chambers).



SHOOTERS need to test many different kinds of ammo to find which works best.

The barrel should be cleaned only when accuracy begins to deteriorate (10,000 to 15,000 rounds for the better barrels) and only with patches, no brushes. Also, once a barrel is cleaned and more matches are to soon follow, the bore needs to be reconditioned by shooting a box of ammunition to regain consistent accuracy.

As for cleaning, the folks at Volquartsen recommend cleaning only when accuracy begins to drop off, and then by using only a pull string type of bore cleaner. In fact, using a brush will void the company's accuracy warrantee.

Many of my fellow competitors clean their .22 rimfires only once a year. Some just use pull strings and some use coated rods with a couple of wet patches followed by couple of dry ones, and then one oiled patch when storing it over extended periods. That's it.

Well, more could be written about the ubiquitous .22, but the real joy is in shooting it. There are dozens of brands of ammunition available, and your rifle will most certainly shoot them differently than mine, so go on out and invest a little time, a little money and have a lot of fun finding out which one shoots best. From mice in the barn to squirrels in the treetops to competitive shooting from the bench, you'll see just how versatile and accurate the .22 Long Rifle really is. □

Snow Bed

MY SPRINGER SPANIEL and I follow the logging road into the brush. A mix of pale gray and dark gray clouds fill the sky above bluish mountains. Zones of yellow and pink lie on the horizon. In the middle of the afternoon, already the colors of evening have begun to tint the sky.

We're hunting on fresh snow from the first real snowfall of the year. Caillie works the cover on each side of the road: heaps of logging slash, patches of sumac, greenbrier and grapevine tangles. Slate-gray juncos feed beneath some weeds. At Caillie's approach, they flit off, their white tailfeathers flashing. A big bird flies out of a snag: a goshawk, with a slate-gray back and a pale breast, it courses off through the woods on powerful wingbeats. Goshawks are maneuverable enough to fly through the brush after grouse. Sometimes they land and pursue their prey on foot, running through the cover — although not on a powdery snow such as the one now covering the land.

Caillie checks a patch of grapevines, and her tail starts wagging furiously. Suddenly a grouse thunders up. I swing the shotgun from right to left. The bird in its flight describes a symmetrical arc: up and out of the cover, killed at the top of its rise, falling down gently into the snow. Caillie fetches the grouse. It's a full-feathered, broad-tailed bird. A male, although not a particularly large one; likely he was hatched this past spring. Using my forefinger, I press down on his crop: slack and empty.

I check the area from which the grouse flushed and find where he had been sitting next to the barkless trunk of a fallen oak. The grouse rested in that spot long enough to have defecated twice: a pair of curved olive-and-white droppings lie in the snow. Faint lacy marks show where the bird's wingtips scratched the snow when he flushed.

I follow his tracks backward. After 30 feet, I come to a hole in the powder about eight inches across and eight inches deep. The grouse left this bed in the morning. He walked ahead and settled in beside the downed oak. When Caillie and I came along, he was probably getting ready to go find food. He would have done so hastily in the twilight. Finishing his meal — grapes, greenbrier fruits, aspen buds — he would have glided to the ground and burrowed into the snow, there to spend the long December night. Beneath the snow — ecologists term this habitat the subnivean environment — temperatures can be up to 50 degrees warmer than the surrounding air.

If the grouse were indeed a bird of the year, then this was the first significant snowfall he had ever encountered. Yet he knew enough to let it blanket him, keep him warm, shield him from the goshawk's eyes. If he'd been farther up the hill, Caillie and I would not have found him.

I put the bird in my game pouch. The day is almost done. The light is fading fast. I feel fortunate, knowing that my path intersected that of the grouse on this brief, stark afternoon.

Chuck Fergus



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Two new Game Commission patches are now available. One is the second in a series of Game News Field Note patches designed by, of course, Nick Rosato, and the other, the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife series patch.

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PA Deer Hunting 1985 vs 2005

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN, and learn some cool stuff about 21st century deer hunting, too. Twenty years ago we ran a survey in *Game News*. Much of the survey had to do with our readers, what they liked and what changes they would like to see. A fair amount of that survey had to do with deer hunting.

Now, 20 years later, we think it will be fun to run a similar deer hunting survey to see how the sport has changed — and hasn't changed — since that time.

Following are pretty much the same questions we asked in 1985. Some questions, though, were modified to reflect changes in regulations and seasons. Please fill out the survey — photocopies are fine, or even send in your answers on a sheet of paper — and mail to: Deer Hunter Survey, Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. We would like to have completed surveys in by the end of the month, March 31, and we hope to publish the results in the October issue.

1. For how many years have you been hunting deer? _____

2. How many deer have you taken in Pennsylvania during your hunting career?
   _____ Antlered _____ Antlerless

3. Do you hunt deer in the following seasons?
   _____ Archery
   _____ Early Muzzleloader
   _____ Regular firearms _____For Antlerless
   _____ Late Flintlock
   _____ Late Archery

4. What make, model and caliber of firearm(s) do you use for deer?

5. What make and power of scope(s), if any, do you use for deer?

6. Do you *always* send in a Big Game Harvest Report card after taking a deer?
   _____ Yes _____ No

7. Do you annually apply for an antlerless license? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Do you annually apply for an "unsold" antlerless license? _____ Yes_____ No
   If so, how many? _____

10. Who processes deer taken by you: yourself, a friend, a commercial butcher (check one)
    _____ Yourself _____ A Friend _____ A Commercial Butcher

11. Do you like the new antler restrictions? _____ Yes _____ No

letters

Editor:

Hunting to me is a time of solitude, observing nature, discovering new sounds, watching animals; in essence, a chance to bond with nature. Lately, though, the solitude has been shattered by the sound of ATVs. Using them to ride to hunting spots is bad enough, I feel, but several times this past season I watched as people used ATVs to pursue deer.

S. Shaw
Lancaster

Using a motor vehicle to pursue game is against the law. Next time, get as much information as possible, and then report the incident right away, to the nearest Game Commission region office.

Editor:

In the 2004-05 Hunting Annual, there's a mistake in your feature about the 75th anniversary of *Game News*. Ned Smith did the cover painting for Special Issue No. 1, printed in September 1950.

Also,your mention of his 118 *Game News* covers does not include the two Ned Smith covers you've run in recent years, to help promote the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art.

A. Smeltzer
Windsor

You're right on both counts, and it wouldn't surprise me if we missed some other covers, too, as Ned did so many over so many years. Thanks.

Editor:

I've been hunting since 1961 and a *Game News* reader since 1972. Something has been bothering me for quite some time. I wish I wouldn't have to take off my coat to get to my deer tag, and I wonder if anyone has ever been shot because they had to remove their fluorescent orange to get to their deer tag. Couldn't our tags be separate?

N. McBride
Clearfield

You'll probably be glad to know that the agency plans to implement a computer based, point-of-sale license system, and that back tags will be replaced with tags that can be carried in a wallet or pocket.

Editor:

I have four grandsons who I want to become deer hunters, as hunting has always been an important family tradition. In fact, my grandfather was Woody Kelly, one of your first game wardens, and later, my Uncle Clair Kelly became a game officer.

Normally, in our camp of eight, we took three or four nice bucks each year, until antler restrictions were enacted. Since then, we have taken one, and it was about the same size as past bucks taken.

The deer in our Clearfield County area have been reduced to the point that the younger members (future hunters) of our family wonder why we continue to hunt, especially when we see more ATVs in the woods than deer.

B. Vandervort
Springville, NY

Editor:

Thanks for the wonderful magazine. Our whole family enjoys the wonderful articles, and we liked the ones from past issues that you ran last year. My father remembered reading some of them in his younger days.

We also want to say that we support the deer management program. My father, my brother and I all got bucks and does last year, and then, after Christmas, we went spotlighting and saw 28 deer.

I think dissatisfied hunters should look for other areas to hunt. Farmers in this area seem to welcome hunters. Deer do a lot of damage to their crops.

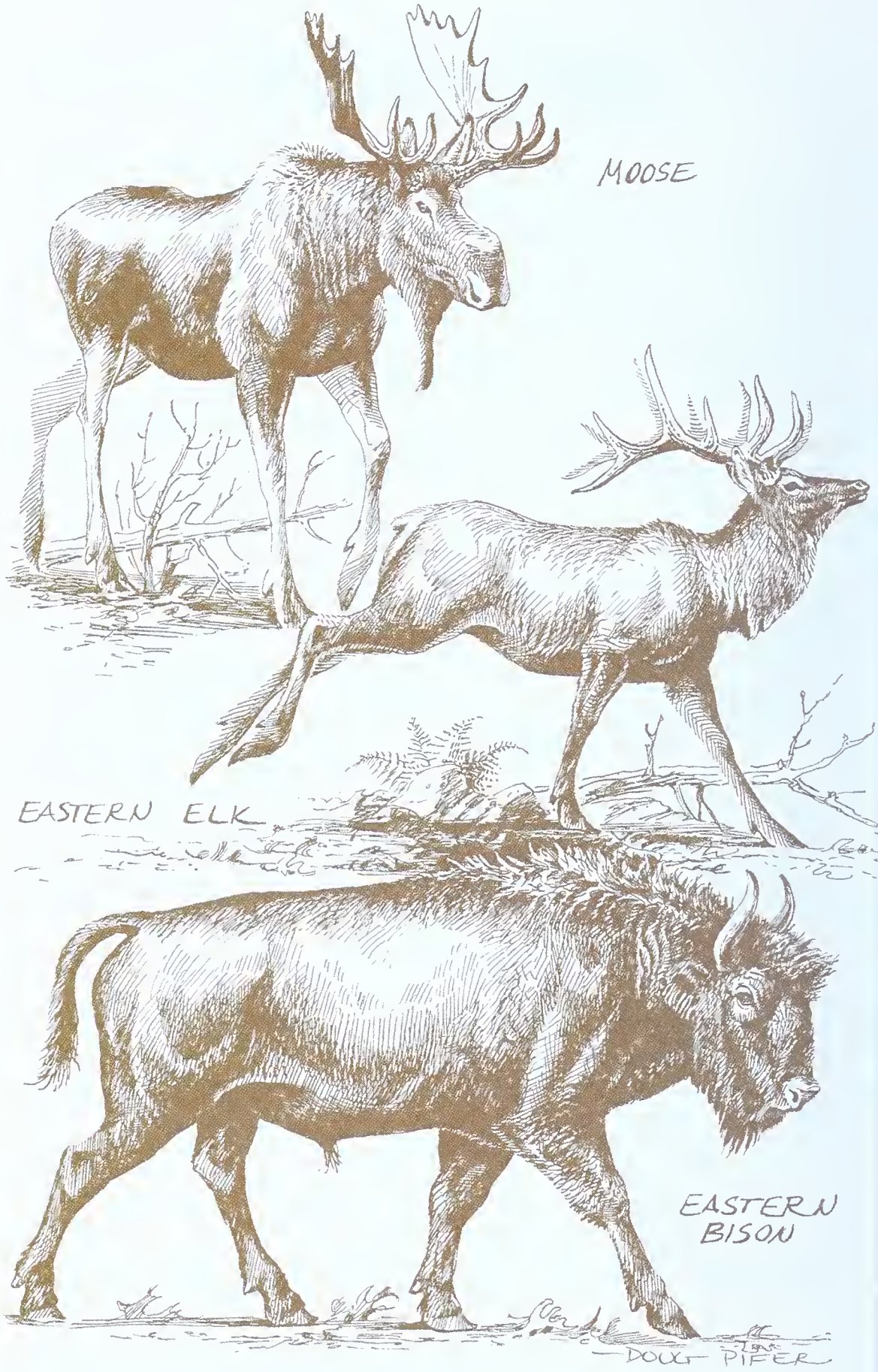
D. Johnson
Smithfield

Editor:

I hope deer hunters continue to support the Game Commission. Yes, we may have to walk farther and hunt harder, but that's good for us. Plus, it's good for trees and other plants, and other animals that benefit from a more balanced deer herd.

S. Bashline
Spruce Creek

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.


MOOSE
EASTERN ELK
EASTERN BISON
DOUG PIFER

To the north, the noble moose could be found.
The rolling hills to the west offered bison.
This game rich utopia was . . .

What Might Have Been

By Brian Halbleib

RAYS OF ORANGE rose above the towering mountain, flooding the landscape with life-giving warmth and light. A chill wind nipped at exposed skin while golden foliage drifted to the forest floor, announcing the approach of shorter days. Squinting out the light, the hunter paused on a moss-covered rock to consider his next move. The longbow in his grip was as comforting as his knowledge of the many animals that could be pursued in this wilderness.

To the north, the noble moose could be found. The rolling hills to the west offered bison. The forests to the east held herds of elk and, of course, deer were everywhere. Every predatory instinct must be sharp to get within range of these glorious creatures. But man was not the only predator stalking these wilds; the wolf, mountain lion and bear shared them.

It is hard to imagine that this game-rich landscape could be anywhere but out West. Fact is, however, this utopia was what's now Pennsylvania, fewer than 300 years ago.

Prior to colonization, moose flourished across much of New York and, to some degree, northern Pennsylvania. They were often called black moose, so not to be confused with what the early settlers called the gray moose, or elk, named so for its lighter coat.

Documentation of moose in our state is not abundant, but there is enough to prove they were here.

Dr. J.D. Schoepf, who traveled through Pennsylvania in 1783-84, wrote in his *Travels in the Confederation* of the Allegheny Mountains between Carlisle and Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), "The black moose is seen here but rarely." H. Hollister's *History of the Lackawanna Valley*, published in 1857, states of Tripp's Meadow near Scranton, "Around this camp game was abundant. The elk and the fleeter moose stood among their native pines, or thundered onward like the tread of cavalry, the deer in fearless mood browsed on the juicy leaf, while the mountain sides, though stem with wilderness, offered to the panther or the bear little shield from the well-poised arrow of the Indian." Hollister goes on to write, "The moose from which the mountain range bordering the Lackawanna (The Moosic) derived its name, were found here in great abundance."

Physical evidence of moose also exists. In 1819, Jim Jacobs, known as *The Seneca Bear Hunter*, discovered a set of moose antlers in a swamp near Bradford, in McKean County. Around 1850, a farmer named John Hennessy dug up a fresh looking pair of moose antlers while grubbing stumps on the edge of Tamarack Swamp in northern Clinton County. Remains of

moose have been found in Durham Cave near Riegelsville in Bucks County and in a natural salt lick in the Allegheny Mountains.

Information relating to the habits of moose in the state is limited. In his *Extinct Pennsylvania Animals*, published in 1917, Henry Shoemaker writes, "Needless to say it is a pretty well established fact that the black moose was not a permanent resident in Pennsylvania during the past 500 years. During exceptionally cold winters up to the last decade of the 18th century, the moose moved southward out of their permanent abodes in the Adirondack wilderness, crossing the Mohawk River at some un-named point, thence following the Catskill wilderness through Schoharie, Green, Ulster and Sullivan counties to Narrowsburg, where they crossed the Delaware in Pennsylvania. From thence they followed the main chain of the Allegheny Mountains in a southwesterly direction through Wayne, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Sullivan, Lycoming, Clinton, Centre, Clearfield, Blair, Cambria, Bedford and Somerset Counties to the Maryland line, the extreme southern limits of their wanderings. They remained true to this path of migration, and those seen or killed in Huntingdon, Mifflin, Westmoreland or Allegheny Counties were presumably driven there by dogs or Indians."

The Native American tribes had named several places based on regular moose sightings. As just mentioned, the mountain range that skirts the Lackawanna Valley was named the Moosic. Moose were observed bathing themselves in the Moshannon, or "Moose Stream." Clearfield was once called Chinkalacamoose — the meeting place of the moose. A glance at town and stream names on a state map will confirm the influence that moose had in their naming.

The last moose in the state were killed between 1780 and 1790. There are no records of any being seen since then. A member of the Buchanan family, who opened a tavern on the Juniata River near McVeytown in 1790, killed one of the last moose that same year.

Bison

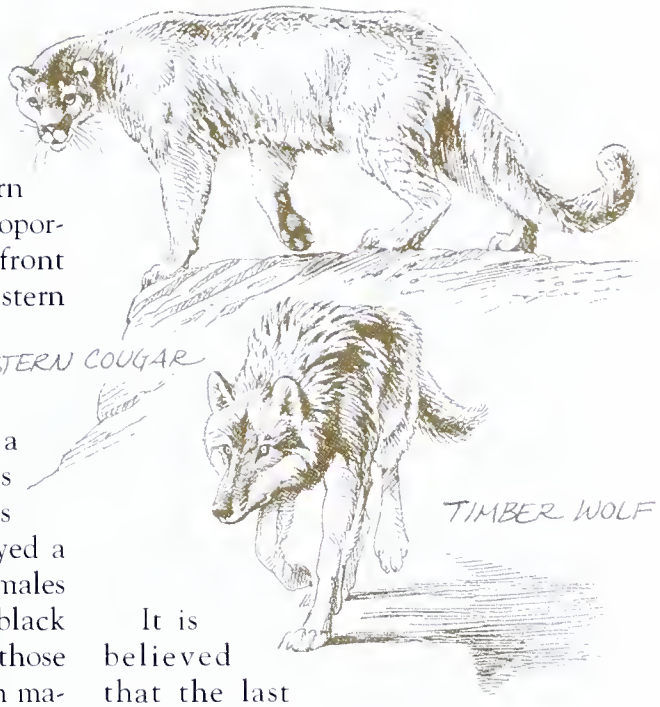
The American bison flourished throughout much of the state until the late 18th century. They primarily inhabited valleys west of the Susquehanna River, migrating between the Great Lakes and the valleys of southern Pennsylvania. From there, their range extended unbroken to the Rocky Mountains of the west.

Philip Quigley, who settled in Clinton County in 1773, had been well-known around those parts as a bison hunter. Quigley followed the bison as they were gradually driven from Buffalo Creek in Bedford County to Buffalo Valley in Union County. He found a patch of land that suited him on the West Branch and settled in the heart of big game country.

The famous Buffalo Path meandered within a few hundred yards of his cabin, extended through the valley of Henry Run, to the east end of Sugar Valley, across the Red Hills, then through the west end of White Deer Valley. From there, the path continued across the Buffalo Mountains, into Buffalo Valley, over Jack's Mountain and the White Mountains to wintering grounds in Middle Creek Valley. The giant beasts wintered there in countless numbers. Prior to the expansion of civilization, the bison continued their migrations south, probably as far as Georgia.

Quigley described the state's bison as tremendous animals. They were much bigger than the bison of the frontier west. The Pennsylvania bison was very dark; most of the old bulls were coal black sporting grizzly white hairs around the nose and eyes. Their

hair was very short and had a tendency to curl, especially near the joints. The prominent back hump characteristic of western bison was not as pronounced on their eastern cousins. Their legs were long and proportionately even, unlike the heavy front and meager hindquarters of the western bison. These bison were agile runners and climbers, lean and carrying no unnecessary flesh, adapted in every way for life in a rough, mountainous country. Bulls often weighed a ton and mature cows half as much. Mature bulls displayed a mane near the absent hump, and males and females wore beards of stiff, black hair. The horns grew upwards like those of beef cattle, and were very long in mature specimens.



These bison preferred dense forests, though they could be found sunning themselves in fields on winter days. In early summer, they could be found pasturing along Lake Erie. As the colder weather approached, they gradually retired to the cool mountaintops of northern Pennsylvania, where they lingered until the first snows. Most of the calves were born in March or April, which allowed them to be adequately developed for the fall migration.

Like moose, the bison played a role in the naming of many locations. Among the early pioneers, bison were often called "wild bulls." There is a Bull Run or Bull Creek in almost every county. Several streams bear witness to the occupation of bison: Le Boeuf Creek in Erie County, Big Buffalo Creek in Armstrong County, Buffalo Run in Centre County and Buffalo creeks in Butler, Bedford, Perry, Somerset, Union, Washington and Allegheny counties. These streams are situated along the former bison migration routes from Lake Erie, near Buffalo, New York, through southern Pennsylvania. Townships with the name Buffalo can be found in Washington, Armstrong, Butler and Perry counties.

It is believed that the last remaining bison in Pennsylvania were killed in 1800 or 1801. There were no verified sightings beyond those years. Colonel John Kelly is credited with killing the last wild bison in Union County on January 19, 1801.

Elk

Thanks to the reintroduction of elk in our state, many people are familiar with the state's history regarding elk. The current elk were relocated from the West and belong to the subspecies known as Rocky Mountain elk *(Cervus elaphus nelsoni)*. However, the original herds were Eastern elk *(Cervus elaphus canadensis)*, called the Canadian or Pennsylvania stag by settlers in eastern and southern parts of the state. Native Americans referred to them as wapiti.

Eastern elk once ranged across the entire state. William Penn mentions them as being killed near Philadelphia in the early part of the 18th century. Colonel Noah Parker of Gardeau, McKean County, related seeing herds of three to four hundred traveling to salt licks. Dr. W.J. McKnight wrote in his *Pioneer Outline History of North-*

western Pennsylvania, published in 1905, that the elk particularly enjoyed bathing in the Clarion River. Dr. J. D. Schoepf mentions the elk as prevalent on the Alleghenies and in the vicinity of Pittsburgh during his travels from 1783 to 1784.

The elk also left its name on numerous landmarks. Elk County was named because it was a favorite wintering ground. There are also Elk Creeks, Elk Valleys, Elk Licks and Elk Lakes all over the state attesting to their inhabitance.

The Eastern elk was exterminated from the state by the late 1870s. One account attributes Jim Jacobs as killing the last Pennsylvania elk in 1867, along the headwaters of the Clarion River, in Elk County. Another account has John D. Decker of Decker Valley, Centre County, as killing the last Pennsylvania elk, on September 1, 1877. It is unfortunate that the elk did not survive to see the creation of the Pennsylvania Game Commission in 1895; game laws may have protected them.

Fortunately, much has been learned about protecting wildlife. Hunters have played a vital role in conservation. With license sales and the help of the federal excise taxes on hunting related products, the agencies charged with wildlife and habitat management continue to protect and care for the state's wildlife. The moose and the bison may never walk these lands again, but no other species is likely to face the same fate. □

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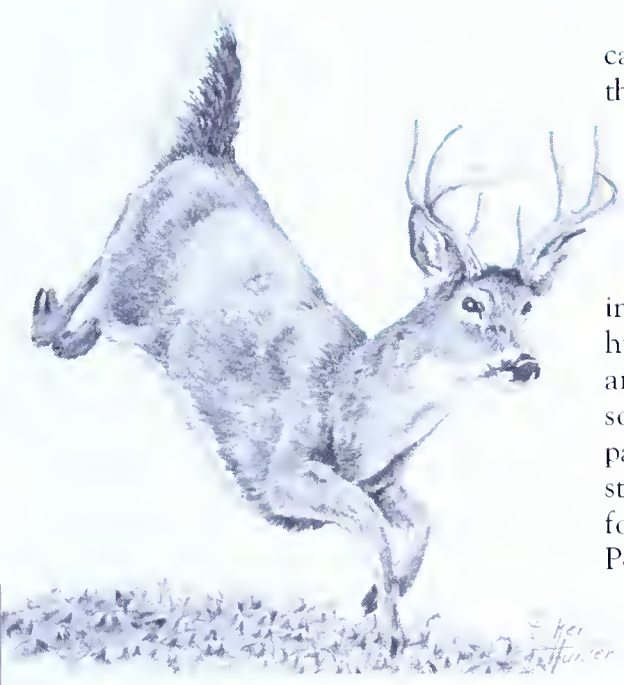
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Please allow 60 days for first copy

Passing it On

By Tony Ferrante



"HEY, BOBBY. What are younze two doing, loafing around Penn Hills?" the elderly man asked in a sharp, boisterous voice honed at Penguins' games and years of barking orders at the steel mill.

"We're up for buck season, of course," my father responded. "I'm taking my boy to Potter County for his first hunting trip."

Several thoughts bombarded my 12-year-old mind: It sure sounded weird to hear Dad called Bobby. Did that man really say "younze"? (Four years in the South had trained my ears to think "ya'll" sounded more natural.) What in the world does loafing mean? Is my heart hammering away because Dad used the magic words "buck season," "Potter County" and "my boy" all in the same glorious sentence?

This brief exchange while waiting for the elevator in my Pap-Pap's apartment building still resonates as a beautiful melody 28 years later. The joy I felt at that moment was overshadowed only by the obvious pride my father displayed in being able to take me hunting. "My boy" he called me. Closing my eyes I still hear the words. At that moment I passed into adulthood. Permission had been granted to join my beloved father in the ranks of men as a hunter.

We went to an Army/Navy store in Monroeville and bought my first hunting knife and a pair of Korean army boots: black rubber, heavy soles and clunky laces. Grandma packed our turkey sandwiches, cold stuffing and meatloaf in preparation for my first drive north into Pennsylvania's mountains. Indiana, Punxsutawney, DuBois, Emporium, Coudersport, Shinglehouse. Those names and so many others form a poetic geography of our route. I had pictured them in my mind countless times as my father told his stories. To me, they still hold more magic than Camelot, Paris or Rome. We left with Pap-Pap and his friends on the long, beautiful drive.

My dad was the greatest hunter I'll probably ever know. He repeatedly showed the ability to locate, stalk and sneak up on large groups of deer bedded down or feeding. He never failed to see, identify antlers or make a perfect shot on a running deer in less time than it takes to read this. Circumstances and responsibilities forced my father to leave his beloved Penn's Woods, however, sadly reducing his time in the field to only an annual trek the day after Thanksgiving to Pittsburgh to meet my grandfather and the rest of his hunting buddies, and then a trip up north. Deer hunting was his sole recreation out of a year filled with too

much work, too many bills and, usually, too little money. In one spectacular week he would recharge his batteries, enabling him to come home to face another year of hard work before being allowed to roam "God's Country" once again in pursuit of deer. And finally, in 1975, at 12, I would accompany him.

We stopped in Emporium to participate in the "World's Largest Pancake Breakfast." It seemed every male (and more than a few females) in Pennsylvania between 12 and death, who owned fluorescent orange clothing, put it on and joined in. It was loud and oppressive, and heavenly. Dad kept running into old friends and crowing, "I'm taking my boy hunting."

In the early afternoon we pulled in at the end of a dirt road near Clara Township, and as we parked I got my first glimpse of Wakely Hollow. Beyond the pastures were graceful ridges with a clear creek running straight down the middle. The trees were gray hardwood skeletons, with a swatch of evergreens halfway down the ridge. It took me only a few minutes to stow all our gear and get changed to go for a hike to see where we'd hunt.

I read *Game News* religiously every month, and can recall in detail the county-by-county breakdown of each year's deer harvest. I had been given my .35 Remington slide action rifle years before I was ever big enough to actually shoot it, and I could take my rifle apart and put it back together blindfolded. Dad took time out of his busy schedule to attend the hunter safety course with me, and encouraged me to work to pay for a nonresident license. Dad taught me to pack my duffel so that as each item came out it could be put right on. I was a boy ready for the woods.

As we walked, Dad explained about deer habits and how best to hunt them. We saw deer, and I staked out a fallen log and stump where I would be the following morning. I wanted to spend the night right there, but the forecast called for below zero temperatures, so I was convinced to come back to the farmhouse for dinner and rest.

Twenty hunters crowded around a hodgepodge dinner. Every table in the house was pulled together and covered with tablecloths, and then the largest amount of food I had ever seen was brought out. These were the men my father had known for 25 years, and every one shared his passion for deer hunting. I followed his advice to speak only when spoken to, which was great because it's also impolite to talk with your mouth full.

Not long after dinner we retired to our bedroom to unwind and get ready for bed. The only heat source in the house was the woodburning stove, so I could see my breath while lying in bed, tucked under six of the heaviest quilts imaginable. It was so cold that the water in the glass beside my grandfather's bed froze during the night. Dad shared a double bed with Mr. Morelli, Pap and Doc bunked together, and I took a cot at the foot of the bed. Some claim there are people who snore louder than Doc, but I doubt it.

Breakfast was oatmeal and toast, and then we collected our lunches with ther-



moses of coffee and headed out into the dark. I dutifully fell in behind my father as we marched single-file through the darkness. Not long after getting settled in our spot, the sun rose over the majestic mountain to my left as I silently sat, drinking in every sight and sound.

A loud crash came from the crest of the ridge at our backs, and my father jumped up as three deer bounded directly toward us. He snapped his .308 to his shoulder and shot the lone buck as it raced past. It was dead before I'd even thought to pick up my rifle. Dad was nothing if not efficient. We said a little prayer of thanksgiving to God for the buck, and then I got schooling in field-dressing.

Diagrams, charts and written instructions did not prepare me for the feeling of thrusting my frozen hands into the steaming body cavity of a deer. Dad showed me where the bullet had entered, gone through the heart and came to rest in the lungs. We salvaged the heart and liver, and then bound the front legs around the head, tied our ropes to the antlers and dragged the deer back to camp by lunchtime. Some of the men had wandered back, and one of them, upon seeing Dad's kill, lamented, "Doggone it, Bobby, you drive all the way from Atlanta and your hunting trip is over before lunch."

"What are you talking about? My fun's just started. Now I get to teach my boy how to hunt these woods," Dad said.

Because Dad's gun had a scope, we packed away my iron-sighted rifle and I carried his custom-stocked rifle. Climbing some loose shale, I slipped and fell, scratching the stock. For years since, I received good-natured ribbing from him about that, and I secretly think he loved the tangible reminder of our first hunting trip as much as I still do to this day.

We spent three days roaming the mountains of Potter County and saw plenty of deer but no more bucks. It didn't matter, though, because Dad and I were together practically every waking moment, in the



environment he loved the most. We were in communion with God, nature and ourselves. I got to take more trips to Pennsylvania with Dad and my brothers, as our schedules would allow, but nothing lives with timeless clarity like that first trip.

My son turned 12 this past year, and I took him to a hunter safety course and tried to share a little of the knowledge my father had given me. Dad and Pap-Pap both passed away six years ago, so neither got to see Anthony dress for his first hunt. My son wore my father's Korean army boots, a dickie crocheted by my grandmother, and carried the .35 Remington that I passed on to him. He had Dad's hunting knife tucked inside the old haversack Pap-Pap bought for me, and swelled with pride when I told people I was taking my boy hunting.

A pilgrimage to Pennsylvania wasn't in the cards, but the woods where we hunted were just as gorgeous. We stopped on the way, so Anthony could get a cup of coffee in his own travel mug. The sun rose as we sat together, as still as the shadows, sharing knowledge, experience and love. We didn't get a deer, but I got to spend an entire day in the woods with my boy, and my dad. □

Last May 900 hunters were randomly selected to tell us . . .

What "You" Think about Hunting PA

By Lori Richardson

YOU MAY HAVE BEEN one of more than 900 hunters to receive a phone call last May as part of a survey conducted for the Game Commission, by Responsive Management, to help us learn about your participation in, motivation for and satisfaction with, hunting here.

Hunters were selected randomly from a list of those who purchased 2000-01 licenses. The survey took 20 minutes and consisted of more than 100 questions such as: What is the main reason you hunt? How likely are you to go hunting? How satisfied are you with your hunting experience? What would encourage you to hunt more? and, How do you rate the Game Commission?

Here's what "you" had to say:

Why do you hunt?

Thirty-seven percent of you said that sport and recreation are the main reasons you're out in the field. Other reasons include spending time with family and friends (22%), being close to nature (15%), relaxation (12%) and for the meat (11%).

Responsive Management specializes in public opinion and attitude surveys relating to natural resources and outdoor recreation. This important research helped put us in-touch with what you (our hunters) need, want and wish for.



CHARLES COX of Columbia, killed this 9-point in Potter County last fall.

What do you prefer?

The majority of you (92%) use rifles, followed by 55 percent favoring shotguns, 35 percent choosing bows and 16 percent heading out with muzzleloaders. Forty-five percent of you are hunting primarily on private land.

The vast majority of you (75%) hunted less than 30 days in the 2002-03 license year, with 26 percent hunting less than 20 days, and 35 percent less than 10.

Most of you are deer hunters (83%) and half of you (49%) hunt turkey. Other game pursued include squirrel (40%), cottontail rabbit (38%), pheasant (35%), ruffed grouse (29%), black bear (17%), woodchuck (12%), crow (6%),

bobwhite quail (5%) and snowshoe hare (2%). Comparitively speaking, this ranking is similar to the agency's Game-Take survey. But from the annual survey, we know that the percentage of deer hunters stays pretty consistent over time, while the percentage of hunters pursuing most of the other species varies from year to year.

Immediate family members are your most common hunting companions (63%) followed by friends (36%) and extended family (21%), and 19 percent of you usually hunt alone.

How much do you hunt?

The survey separated respondents into three categories: active hunters, inactive hunters and ex-hunters. Active hunters (88%) were those who had hunted in at least one of the past two seasons (2002-03 or 2003-04) and intend to hunt in the future. Inactive hunters (6%) did not hunt in either of the previous two seasons but intended to hunt in the future, and ex-hunters (less than 3%) did not expect to hunt in this state again.

According to license sales, the number of people who hunt in Pennsylvania has remained relatively stable, with only a slight decline since 1980. Survey data indicates that the vast majority of Pennsylvania hunters are generally quite avid, meaning that they hunt every year. More than half (58%) are hunting just about as much as they have over the past five years, and 17 percent said that they've been hunting more.

Of the three percent who do not intend to hunt in the future, the ex-hunters, the main reasons are health and age related (35%). Other factors causing you to give up hunting are: lack of time (23%), the places you used to hunt are gone or developed (8%) and lack of game (8%).

Most of you (61%) are hunting small game less. For those who aren't hunting small game as much as they used to, the main reasons are lack of game (39%), lack of time (21%) and age or health related issues (14%). It's interesting to note that survey results indicate that hunters who have *never* hunted small game are more likely to become inactive or ex-hunters.



HEIDI REISENGER of Newport, shot this 11-point opening day of 2004, in Perry County.

Why would you hunt more?

The most likely reason that would encourage you to spend more time afield is having a child ask you to take them hunting.

Number two is an invitation from a friend. This information mirrors research conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation STEP OUTSIDE program, indicating that an invitation to go hunting is an important factor in encouraging people to hunt more often or, in the case of an ex-hunter, to hunt again.

Vacations that offer hunting experiences, more opportunities to hunt big game, more opportunities to hunt on private lands and oppor-

tunities to hunt on Sunday also topped the list of factors that would encourage you to hunt more.

Fifty-eight percent of you said that more small game hunting opportunities would encourage you to hunt more. Sixty-six percent said the same about opportunities to hunt big game. Small game species favored for more chances to hunt are pheasant (55%), cottontail rabbit (33%), grouse (21%) and squirrel (17%). Big game favorites are deer (78%), bear (28%), turkey (20%) and elk (18%).

Are you satisfied?

For the most part, you feel positive about your hunting experiences. Seventy-nine percent of you were very or somewhat satisfied with your Pennsylvania hunting over the past two years. Only 10 percent were dissatisfied.

What frustrates you?

Work obligations (50%), lack of game (48%), poor behavior of other hunters (37%), lack of places to hunt (37%) and lack of Sunday hunting opportunities (36%) are what interfere most with your enjoyment of hunting.

It's interesting to note that Pennsylvania's ex-hunters seem more frustrated with a lack of game and a lack of access (whether they're perceived or actual) than ex-hunters at a national level. Of the 23 Pennsylvania respondents identified as ex-hunters, 14 (60%) said that not enough game strongly or moderately influenced their decision to stop hunting; 46 percent said the same about lack of access.

How's the PGC doing?

Most of you shared positive opinions of the Commission's ability to manage wildlife and hunting seasons. Seventy-one percent gave good or excellent ratings for providing hunting opportunities, and 62 percent believe the agency is doing a good or excellent job managing and conserving wildlife. Additionally, 69 percent of you gave law enforcement good or excellent performance ratings.

Now what?

Two types of issues influence how much you hunt and how much you enjoy hunting: social-psychological issues and resource related issues. Social-psychological issues are work and family obligations, age, health and lack of time, and these are beyond the Game Commission's abilities to influence. The agency does, however, play a role in some of the resource related issues — availability of game, game law violators, availability of places to hunt, lack of Sunday hunting, complex regulations and number of hunters in the field, to name a few.

What we'll be doing:

The Game Commission is reviewing the findings of this report and others to find out how we can serve you better. We're already working to make it easier for you to find private properties open to public hunting through our Public Access Program. Believe it or not, there is private land open to public hunting within 10 miles of nearly every Pennsylvanian.

We'll be looking at ways to create new hunting opportunities, including the possibility of Sunday hunting, and we'll continue promoting ethical hunting behavior and investigating ways to recruit new hunters.

What you can do:

In Pennsylvania, and across the nation, our hunting population appears to be getting older. Yes, of course, we're all getting older; what this means is that the *average* age of hunters is older than it used to be. Participants in this survey averaged 47 years of age, most falling into the 45-54 age class. Survey data from the

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimates that, in 2001, the majority of PA hunters fell into the 35-44 age class, and in 1996 the 35-44 age class also ranked largest, but with 11 percent more hunters than in 2001.

In essence, the number of young men and women entering the hunting population has been too small to counteract this aging overall average. Therefore, knowing hunters, as a group, are aging, and because health and age related issues are the most common reasons people become ex-hunters, we can predict that an increasing percentage of hunters will be dropping out in the coming years. This means that recruiting new hunters will play an even more important role in sustaining hunter numbers.

Hunting is a great way to spend time with family and friends. If you'd like to take someone afield with you for a special day and aren't sure how to approach him or her, visit the STEP OUTSIDE website at **www.stepoutside.org/card.html** to print a "gift certificate" for an experience they can't resist. On the other hand, if you're the one anxiously awaiting a hunting experience, you can also visit the site for an equally appropriate "greeting card" designed specifically to help you ask for an invitiation from that special hunter.



KATHRYN GEARY of Glenmore, and her 8-point taken in Chester County, Dec. 2004.

To view the entire report, visit the Responsive Management website at **www.responsivemanagement.com.** Click on Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation Research, Hunting, Click for a list of reports and finally Factors Related to Hunting Participation in Pennsylvania.

Something we can all do now to help the future of hunting is watch how we behave, and how our behavior may affect nonhunters. Rude, unethical and illegal actions aren't just wrong and they don't just reflect poorly on the person behind them. They also reflect poorly on the hunters (most likely family and friends) that accompany the wrongdoer, and on hunters in general. One hunter's unfit actions can create ugly impressions of all hunters among the general public and worse yet, cause other hunters, including a wrongdoer's own hunting companions, to enjoy the sport less or, perhaps, even give up the pastime altogether. Be polite to landowners and above all, behave out there.

Lastly, visit the agency's website, **www.pgc.state.pa.us**, for information on hunting, wildlife and Game Commission programs. Though 67 percent of you have access to the Internet in your home, less than 43 percent of you have visited our website. Checking out our website, and continuing to read *Game News*, will help you stay informed on all the latest news and issues.

If we all do our part, we'll help ensure many satisfying hunting experiences for our future hunters (young and old alike) and we'll be able to pass on the gratifying tradition of enjoying the outdoors as only dedicated sportsmen and sportswomen can. □

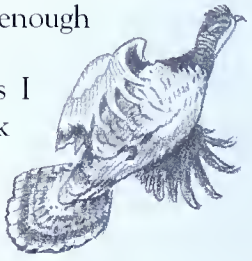
What is it that makes a man feel like a child on Christmas Eve the night before the grouse opener?

Musings of a Grouse Hunter

By Lloyd I. Smith

IT DIDN'T really matter a whole lot back then. It seemed that hunting was something that just about everybody did. It was an autumn ritual. You hunted because your father and your grandfather before him did. According to my way of thinking, it was just like the reason you grew up to be a Republican, a Democrat, a Methodist or a Catholic. Somehow the decision had been made for you and you didn't think much about it.

My first memory of hunting was shortly after World War II, when Uncle Lloyd and Uncle Bud returned home and once more joined their father in hunting his farm. It was a family event. I remember men and boys standing patiently in roadside ditches along fields, looking at their pocket watches, anxiously awaiting the legal hunting hour. In some communities the fire siren would announce the much awaited moment. I remember long-tailed ringnecks and rabbits shot over Molly, Pap-Pap's little red setter. I got to smell the traces of gunsmoke left in the old paper Peters shells, and was the recipient of rabbit tails plucked and stuffed into my sweater pockets. Most of all, I remember what Pap-Pap's gnarled farmer's hands looked like wrapped around his old Winchester Model 12. I didn't need to know why these men killed game animals when each season rolled around. They just did. We ate them. They tasted good, and that was good enough for me.



For a few years I was allowed to walk along on hunts with older family members. Those years I carried no gun;



it was my job to meander an assigned set of harvested cornrows between hunters. I was to stay in line, not only for safety's sake, but also to ensure that no game doubled back behind us. I was just the right size to crawl into any corn shocks that might be likely hiding places. I was privileged at times to carry an occasional rabbit or ringneck, and most importantly, I was allowed to hold the rabbits upside down, back legs spread apart just so, while they were being skinned and dressed. I didn't know what "rites of passage to manhood" meant back then. I was being shown how it was done, just like getting chickens ready for market. I'd witnessed that, and this was no different, except for the fact that these were rabbits and pheasants and we would eat these.

As time passed, things changed. I was allowed to carry my Daisy Red Ryder BB gun, as long as I didn't point it at anyone; if I did, it would be left back at the house. I was never fast enough to get a good bead on any game that flushed from hiding, but it was exciting, nonetheless, and made me even more anxious for the day when I could carry a regular, loaded, hunting gun afield.

I was becoming a hunter. I was in on the killing of game. I would soon be hunting and killing alone. No one asked me why or how I could do it then, and the answers to those unasked questions really didn't matter. That was the way it was done.

In the fall of 1955, two significant events occurred (besides the new '56 Chevy rolling off the assembly line, that is.) I pinned my first hunting license on the back of my coat, and my father gave me a whole box of Winchester Ranger shotgun shells and told me I could use his old 12-gauge Hercules single-shot to get us a rabbit or two after school. Well, you can be certain that the grass didn't grow too much longer before I was heading into the neighbor's cornfield in search of game. I put a few rabbits on the table that year and, in my second season, I killed my first ringneck.

I was on my own. It felt good when I was able to provide meat for our family table. In time, squirrels, rabbits and even pheasants that fell to my gun became more plentiful. I began to travel to the uplands of Clinton, Lycoming and Tioga counties to take the occasional and much more challenging grouse and woodcock.

I graduated from high school, began dating the girl who would become my wife, graduated from college, got married and became a father three times. And in all those years, I never wondered why it was that when autumn came around I was compelled by some unexplored and ever-present urge to take up my double-barreled shotgun in pursuit of game.

I never missed a year. There were dogs, Brittanys, named Molly and Elsie. Now there is only Elsie to accompany me in the old apple orchards, aspen groves and alder patches of Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and New York. My wife understood, as did I, that this was just something one did, just like her father, my father, uncles and their fathers before them. Some of the more precious memories I hold are of hunting with my wife, my son, my daughters and their mates.

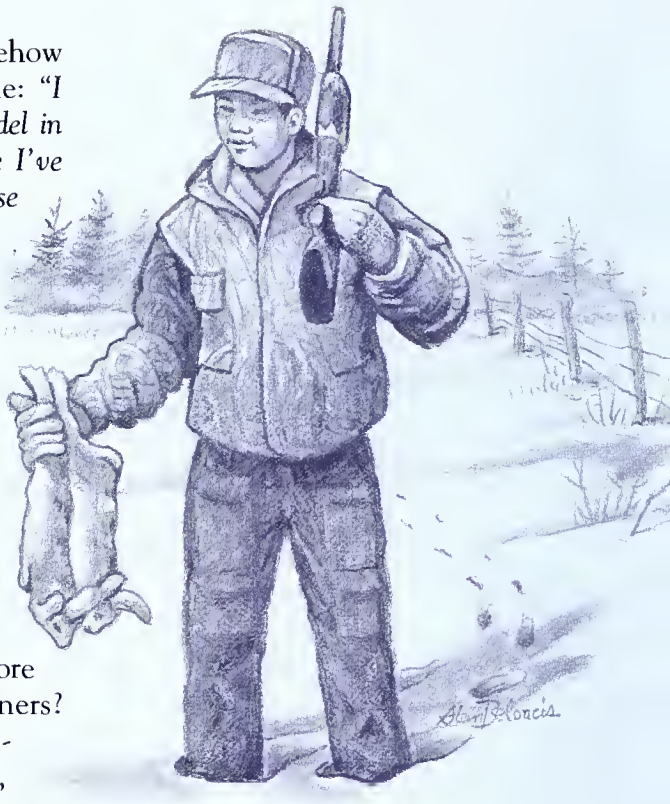
Time, however, has a way of changing things and raising questions. Country people move to the city and city people to the country. Different cultures and family traditions cross paths. My wife and I met new people and our children made new friends. Children grew up, married and had children of their own. Walt Disney's *Bambi* hit the theaters and PETA got some press. Questions never before asked were now being asked for the first time. *"Why do you hunt?" "Do you really shoot and eat cute, little furry bunnies?" "Do you really kill the state bird?" "How can you bring yourself to kill any of God's crea-*

tures?" I had answers that somehow seemed appropriate at the time: *"I hunt because every male role model in my early life hunted," "Because I've always done it," "I sure do, because they taste so good."* No, those answers weren't good enough. My friends who are nonhunters deserve better and more thoughtful answers, and my grandchildren deserve finer answers from their Pop Pop.

Now it matters. Now I am 61 years old and want to pass on to them:

What is it that makes a man toss and turn like a little kid on Christmas Eve the night before the woodcock and grouse openers? What makes him wake up, without the help of an alarm clock, before the crack of dawn to do for free, what "sane" people wouldn't get caught doing for money? What makes him laugh like a child when a puppy licks his face and cry like a baby when his old birddog dies? What makes him complain about gas costing more than $2 a gallon, when he's paid $283.91 a pound for ruffed grouse over the years?

With God so present in both, what makes him think about hunting when he's sitting in church, yet never think about church when he's hunting? What are the threads that bond him to kindred spirits that adore birds, dogs and double guns? What makes him collect, fill his library, read and re-read the literary contributions of Gene Hill, Burt Spiller, William Harnden Foster, Corey Ford, George Bird Evans, and Williamsport, Pennsylvania's own John Alden Knight? What is it that makes him shoot a bird he loves and pursues beyond reason, and then stand and cradle its lifeless body in his hands, smoothing its feathers and feeling the pangs of remorse?



In recent years, with this being my 50th year of upland hunting, I've tried to come up with all the answers, but the question is just too big for me to get my arms around. I know that for me, hunting is a passion. It's a love of the purest form of freedom, and it may be what outdoor writer John Madson calls the "timeless effort to close that magic circle of man, wilderness and animal." The ruffed grouse is the gamebird I admire most. It embodies quickness, beauty, freedom, daring tenacity, pride, survival and wildness, and in its pursuit, places me in the wilderness. For me, hunting ruffed grouse is a spiritual experience. It balances me. It refreshes me. It humbles me. It clears and sharpens my senses. It quiets my inner noise and it sets me free from everyday burdens. To kill and eat such a magnificent creature completes the circle of which I am part.

This is what I know to be true. This is what I will tell those who ask and hope that they can understand in time. But then, once again, maybe it's not so important to understand why it is, but simply that it is. □

The Game Preserve Poacher

By Michael Beahm
Lehigh County WCO

I HAD little time to prepare for the hunting season. I had spent the previous six weeks at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, for training with the military. Typically, it's busy from the start of the early goose and dove hunting seasons, and it was already October and I'd spent little time in the woods. This year we would have to rethink our methods of patrolling. Little did I know what was in store for my deputies and me.

Our heavy workload made it difficult to concentrate on specific areas during the archery season, so we spent our time putting out small fires on a daily basis. During the third week of the season, Deputy Roy "Whitey" Lerch noticed a Dodge pickup parked on Game Preserve Road, which is unusual, because hunting is not permitted in this area.



The Lehigh-Trexler Game Preserve was once owned by industrialist General Trexler. The property was deeded to Lehigh County in 1935, following Trexler's death, to be a public preserve, for wildlife, especially the general's elk and bison herd. With no public hunting allowed, the property has become a sanctuary for deer, turkeys and other game, and a prime area for poaching.

"There's only 30 minutes till dark; let's sit on it," I said. "I'll be right over."

Nearly an hour went by until, finally, we spotted a light coming down through the woods. The light then went out and then, suddenly, the interior lights in the truck came on, startling Whitey and me.

"Do you think he saw us?" I asked.

The interior light was bright and blinded our vision, but we heard the fence rattle and the rustle of leaves, and out walked an individual from the game preserve. Whitey confronted the individual as he approached his truck.

"Officer Lerch, with the Pennsylvania Game Commission," Whitey announced. "May I ask what you are doing here this evening?" It was quite obvious, as the individual was dressed in camo, carrying a bow and a treestand on his back.

"I was just hunting up on this ridge," responded the hunter, who we later identified as Greg.

He tried to tell us that he didn't know he was in the game preserve, despite posters on nearly every tree and a fence along its borders. It was obvious to us what Greg was up to. This time of the archery season required bowhunters to wear fluorescent orange while moving to and from their stand location. Greg had no orange on, nor was he displaying his hunting license, which was a sure way to hide his identity if he was seen in the park.

The next day dispatcher Ed Shutter said he had just received some good information about the incident we had been on the previous night. The word that someone got caught hunting in the game preserve traveled quickly.

The information came from a guy we knew as John. John frequently hunts on the game lands near the preserve, and is aware of everything happening in the area. John appeared to be fed up with the amount of poaching that was going on.

John told us that a guy named Eric shot three bucks — two 8-points and a 9-point. Supposedly, Eric has a crossbow permit and used a crossbow to shoot the deer. Eric was from Palmerton and had been hunting with two other guys from that area, Greg and Frank. It just so happened that the Greg we had met the night before was from Palmerton.

"They shot two 8-points and a 7-point!" our informant exclaimed. "I hope you catch those guys. They're taking all the big bucks from us."

Having already made contact with Greg, we suspected that the trio would now be more careful when going about their illegal activities. That Saturday, we developed a plan. Deputies Bob Yeager, Whitey, Joe DiMaggio and I made a sweep through the preserve on foot. We chased a lot of deer and turkeys, but didn't find anyone hunting.

After a similar sweep the next weekend yielded the same results, Joe commented, "This is just Mike's way of trying to get us into shape."

"There is nothing wrong with getting out and walking once in a while," I quipped. I knew my deputies were frustrated, but we weren't going to catch these poachers sitting in our trucks.

One afternoon I noticed another truck parked along Game Preserve Road. I had Jim and Whitey set up in their vehicles to watch, while I sat nearby in the woods. During the surveillance a vehicle drove up to Jim and Whitey. It was John, our infor-

mant. "They shot two 8-points and a 7-point," John exclaimed. "I hope you catch those guys. They're taking all the big bucks from us." The deputies assured John we were doing our best.

By now it was dark, and we expected to have a hunter show up at any minute. And with a license check indicating the truck we were watching was registered to a person from Palmerton, we felt we were on the right track.

As we waited, John pulled up along Whitey's truck again. "I spotted lights. They're sneaking out the backside of the preserve," John said.



Upon hearing the news I ran to the area John described. It must have been a half mile away, but I knew a shortcut and got there in no time. Jim and Whitey left their post and headed to the area where John had noticed the lights. Jim could see lights, but did not notice them moving. Calling on the radio he was able to position me where I could plainly see the lights. From my position I could easily see it was the lights in the zoo area that they had been looking at. With the wind blowing through the trees, it appeared that the lights were moving.

"Let's return to our positions," I radioed. By the time we returned, though, the vehicle was gone.

The next morning John called again, "Mike, they're at it again, but this time on Mill Creek Road."

With it raining out I was hoping to spend time in my office, but the paperwork would just have to wait. "I'll be right there," I replied.

This time two individuals had been seen dragging a doe from the game preserve. They got into a black Chevy pickup without a tailgate and left with the deer. We were too late, but this was a break, because now the suspects had been seen with a deer, and because we now had descriptions of Eric and Frank. Eric was described as a tall male in his 20s, with blond hair and blue eyes. He was the one who had been reported killing the big bucks.

A couple of days later I drove past the same area and spotted a black Chevy pickup with no tailgate. This time we were not letting them get away.

Luckily, Whitey (who has been serving as a deputy for more than 37 years) was out picking up a roadkill and available to help. I hid the state truck and started walking. The game preserve is extremely thick, so it's best to walk the deer trails. Luckily, the trails are abundant and heavily traveled. After walking for nearly two hours and finding no signs of anyone being in the preserve, I stopped to take a drink of water and heard some noise in a tree.

A hunter was just 20 yards away, sitting in a portable treestand. Fortunately, he hadn't seen me, so I slowly backed away and sat down behind a bush. The hunter had a crossbow, so I assumed it was the person we were looking for. After about 20 minutes the hunter climbed down, and I radioed Whitey to let him know

what was going on. "I'll follow him and see if he leads us to anyone else in here," I said.

I must have followed the hunter for a couple hundred yards. It appeared he was looking for a new spot to hunt from, so I decided to confront him. "State officer," I said. "I'd like to check your license." The hunter was, to say the least, surprised. He was about 6-2, with blond hair and blue eyes. I was quite sure this was Eric, and after checking his license, I was positive.

"Eric, you're hunting in a public park and you're not wearing the required fluorescent orange," I told him.

"You're right, you caught me," he replied.

It seemed too easy. I escorted him out to Mill Creek Road where Whitey met us. I told Eric we needed to talk some more about the deer he shot in the preserve. He assured me that he had not taken any deer. "Can you explain the deer you were seen dragging out of the preserve a few days ago?" I asked.

"Frank shot that deer," Eric replied.

We told Eric we needed to go back to his house and talk. Our informant had told us that there were antlers on a table in Eric's backyard. WCO Ray Lizzio was radioed to assist us, because we would be in his district. Ray arrived at Eric's house before us, so he drove around to see if there were any signs of antlers or deer. Ray noticed a shed behind the house. The odd thing was that the shed was covered with flies. Ray took a closer look from the alley and could see a skinned deer hanging inside. Ray radioed us about his findings.

As we pulled up in front of Eric's house I asked him one more time if he had shot any deer. His head dropped and there was a moment of silence. "Okay, I shot an 8-point last Friday," he said. "It's hanging in the shed out back."

Eric took us to the shed to see the deer. It had been hanging for five days in 60-degree temperatures. The deer was green, covered in flies, and had a stench that would knock your socks off. Looking at Whitey and Ray, I could see the disgust in their eyes. In the meantime Whitey told me he had noticed two 8-point racks and a 7-point rack on the picnic table, so we went to take a look. "Eric, this doesn't look good," I said.

"I found those on Broad Mountain," he replied.

"Come on, Eric, this is your one chance to tell the truth," I told him. "You lied to us earlier." Again there was silence.

"Okay, I shot all of the deer in the preserve," he mumbled.

Again, for a moment it almost seemed too easy, but for all crimes this guy had done, we wanted to record them on paper. For the next hour we sat in Eric's kitchen, taking statements. He identified all the deer and the days they were shot. His excuse was that he had been laid off from his job, shot the first 8-point and did not want to end his hunting season so soon. A big 8-point was the last deer he had taken. He had plans to mount it and enter it in a big buck contest. I wondered how anyone could take pride in such a "trophy."

After nearly two weeks of trying to catch up with these guys, Whitey had a smile from ear to ear, knowing that all the hard work had finally paid off. Charges were filed for four illegal deer, wanton waste, lack of fluorescent orange and hunting in a public park. He's on a hunting license revocation for a long time, now, and we'll be out there watching to make sure he doesn't make any more clandestine trips into the park, or anywhere else, in the meantime. □

Overcoming Cabin Fever

By Charlie Heidecker

ANOTHER hunting season comes to a close and you've filled your tags; now the big letdown begins. I usually spend some time packing all my hunting clothing away, after making sure it's in good shape for the next year, and I clean all my guns. But after that, it begins — the hunting doldrums, cabin fever, or whatever you want to call it. For me, even at this time of year, there are times when I just have to get out of the house, and I'm sure many of you feel the same way.

On a trip back to my deer stand after the season, with camera in hand, I spied a red fox and a great horned owl landed in a nearby tree.

Several years ago I decided to do something about this "lost time" of the year. Having always enjoyed the fine photographs in the many hunting magazines I subscribe to, it seemed only natural to pick up my camera, pack a lunch and head for my favorite woodlot. That first outing was such a success that I now no longer worry about having something to do after the hunting seasons close.

I'm sure nearly everyone has heard that old saying, "what you see when you don't have a gun," but I never realized the truth of that statement. On that first trip I







went back to my favorite hunting spot, where I had stood with a rifle only a few weeks earlier, during deer season. Looking back I remember thinking at the time, I'll bet all the really big bucks have been taken by now. I spent a week hunting and didn't see any bucks, lots of does, but no trophy for my den wall. While deer hunting I did enjoy seeing squirrels, a fine red fox and even a great horned owl that settled in a tree 30 feet from me.

This time I had not been in the woods for more than an hour when I heard the familiar gate of a deer coming up the hill. Heavy frost made the leaves crunchy, and the sound got louder and louder. I tensed and put my camera up to my eye, waiting, being careful not to scare off the deer. Checking the hillside, I noticed a doe heading straight for me. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught another movement. I turned and put my telephoto lens on what turned out to be an 8-point buck. I tried to keep him in focus while snapping a few quick pictures. I got three before he trotted off, his antlers seemingly glowing in the morning sun. That trophy 8-point now hangs on my den wall, one of the most cherished photos I have ever taken. He is now only one among the several hundred I have "shot" during my extra hunting season.



HERE'S A PAIR of redheads you're likely to see and possibly photograph when you're out and about in the early spring in a hardwood stand.

Although I have no intention of giving up hunting with a gun or bow, now I usually carry my 35mm camera loaded and ready to shoot, and I've found that it thrills me just as much to shoot five or six pictures as it does to bag a buck. When I get home, I don't have to clean anything, nor am I tired from a long drag. After about 20 minutes or so in the darkroom, I have my trophy, and the real thing is still out there.

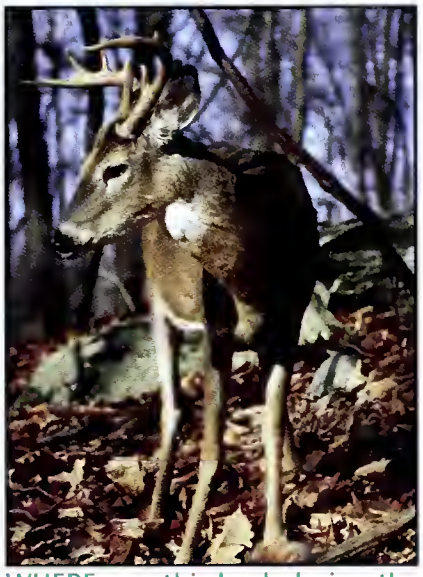
Spending more time in the woods during the off-season produces several

benefits. Getting valuable exercise in the outdoors is one, but learning more about wildlife is another benefit not to be taken lightly. I've watched as a newborn fawn struggled to its feet, and as young beavers were being taught to swim by their parents. Once I was lucky enough to see a mother fox with her young, and even watched as she stole an egg from the nest of an angry Canada goose.

The things I learn during the off-season give me an edge during the regular hunting season. Long before opening day now, I know the location of the best deer trails and where the buck rubs are. By using the techniques learned while hunting with a camera, you'll be able to get closer to your subject than ever before and become a much more successful hunter.

One time I was photographing from a blind — or hide, as the English call it — and was trying my new turkey call. I have to admit, I had never tried to call in a turkey, and I should have practiced before going afield. I spent an entire day scaring off just about everything within earshot of my poor calling attempt. When I got home I called a turkey hunter friend, who gave me a few lessons on how to call, and after a few days of practicing I gave it another try.

On my next outing, after giving a few clucks on my call, I got a reply. I continued to call, and after about a half hour, a fine tom came strutting in and stopped about 20 feet away. I got off three quick photos before he vanished.



WHERE was this buck during the hunting season? It makes you wonder.

In your quest for wildlife photos, it's extremely important that you never corner any wild animal, regardless of what species it is. Respect your subjects and don't disturb them. Young birds left by adults too long can die. A fawn is not lost just because you don't see its mother; she's most likely hiding nearby. A mother bear in spring with cubs can be dangerous. Know your subjects and their capabilities.

My second season, as I now call it, extends from the end of the regular hunting season right into the next. Someone told me a long time ago the hours you spend in the woods enjoying wildlife are not deducted from your lifespan. I don't know about that, but it's an interesting concept. Don't be disappointed if your first or second trips afield are not productive. Patience is the key to putting a nice trophy photo on your den wall.

A stand overlooking a small pond or watering hole makes an excellent place to set up to wait for deer, bear or some elusive bird that might stop by for a drink.

After your regular season is over give outdoor photography a try and stretch your "hunting" time to all 12 months of the year. The rewards are tremendous. □

Young Guns

Last year's first special Youth Spring Turkey Hunt seems to have been a big hit. Here are a few youngsters who took advantage of the hunt last season, and some other "young guns" who tagged birds. This year's youth hunt is slated for April 23.



JACOB GETTYS, 12, Carlisle, took this tom on May 1 last year in Sullivan County, with guidance from father JEFF and grandfather JOHN PLOWMAN. STEPHEN STAUFFER, Hazleton, below, got his gobbler in Columbia County.

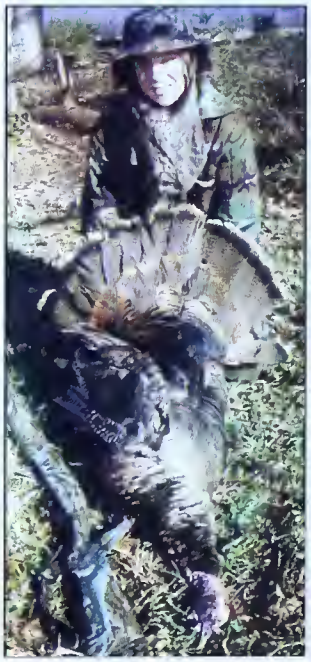




Two toms for two Teds. TED and TEDD PIELLER, Kutztown, had an awesome opening day, both taking mature gobblers. Young Tedd's bird weighed 18 pounds, and Dad's went 16.



JACOB "Jake" EHRETS, above, accompanied by his father STEVEN, bagged this 24-pound gobbler in Susquehanna County on last year's youth spring turkey hunt. MIKE SHEMANSKY JR., Orefield, right, got his Carbon County tom on the youth hunt while being accompanied by his grandfather EDWARD SHEMANSKY.





ROB EARNEST, 12, St. Augustine, got this gobbler on his first turkey hunt during the special youth hunt last year.



EMILY POTCHAK, 12, Karns City, got this tom on last year's youth hunt after her dad, Mike, called in five other birds before she could get a clean shot at this one. Way to go, Emily!



ZACH SMITH, 16, Macungie, got this 24-pound tom in Berks County during the youth hunt last year.





JASON MASH, 12, Windber, middle right, got his gobbler in Somerset County while accompanied by his father DENNIS. MARK BITER, New Enterprise, right, shown here with his father MARK SR., killed an 18-pound tom with a 9-inch beard and 1-inch spurs.

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by

Bob Sopchick

Cairn Hollow

AT DAYBREAK the buck crosses a woods road, then picks his way up through the long, deep hollow. Its tall pale antlers catch the blush of the new day, glowing softly in the dim light as if radiating through the fire that burns within. The buck's quiet passage does not go unnoticed, however, as two hunters, one on each side of the hollow, watch the biggest buck either had ever seen.

On the steep, shadowy slope, Virgil is nestled into the curve of a beech trunk, working a flock of turkeys across the hollow when the tips of the buck's tines poke up into view. The buck is just down the slope, and the hunter scrutinizes every detail. The bluish sheen of its winter coat appears almost membranous, and its dark, wide-set eyes burn like embers with the reflection of the etched skyline. He notes the cryptic nicks and scratches on the wide, polished antlers that tell of trees thrashed and rivals battled. The deer stops and licks its nose, nostrils flaring and pinching as it drinks in the nuances on an updraft, then moves on. Virgil marvels at the sheer power it exudes. The whole of the buck is greater than the sum of its parts; more than a deer, it is a true juggernaut of autumn.

Virgil peels a birch leaf pressed into the ground by a blunt hoof. He twirls the leaf between thumb and forefinger while gazing absently ahead at the empty trail. As always, he had taken off the first week of deer season, but now he's already revising his schedule for the second week, in case he would need more time to hunt this deer.

A half mile farther up the hollow, on the opposite, now sunlit sidehill, a squirrel hunter sits amid a trio of closely spaced trees, which also serves as his deer stand. A flicker of movement that he thinks is a fox squirrel he had seen earlier proves to be the swiveling ear of a deer. The buck emerges from behind a windfall, and the hunter's pulse quickens when the sun flares off its sweeping antlers.

"Nine, ten, eleven," Beatty whispers.

With a flick of its tail, the buck melts into the thicket. Beatty smiles. His stand borders a long, dense laurel jungle rimmed by towering rhododendron. To reach it requires a long hike up through the hollow, then a difficult climb across a rocky hillside. During the course of the first day, deer funnel in, and he knows it isn't just wishful thinking to suspect that the big buck might try to sneak through here come the opener.



The two men had hunted the same hollow for years, and had on occasion seen one another, but always from a distance, and so remained strangers. The hollow is a book, with pages left and right, the hunters like bookmarks marking the same passage.

ON A MAP, Cairn Hollow has the configuration of a

copperhead sunning on the leaves. Beginning with the broad, triangular head near the road, it narrows, then coils back three miles into the uplands. Cairn Hollow was named for the large pile of rocks heaped at the mouth of the hollow. Twice as high as a man, the pile was thought to be a monument, or cairn, as the resident Scotch-Irish settlers had called it.

Stories surrounding the origin of the cairn ranged from one that told of how it was a rock mound made by Indians, while another proclaimed it a monument to a small child who succumbed to snakebite from the days when homesteads dotted the west slope of the hollow. The mourning family laid the stones upon the child's grave, but so widespread was the compassion that passersby would add other stones to the cairn until it had reached a dimension in proportion to their sympathy. Another tale told that the bones of a beloved draft horse lay beneath the rocks. Others thought that it was nothing more than a pile of stones stacked long ago to be used for a hearth in a home or a charcoal furnace that was never built. Whatever the truth, the mysterious cairn stood as a monument to the stalled progress of man.



The cairn itself was now veiled with vines, and clumps of ferns had sprouted from the leaf-stuffed recesses. From a distance, its shape appeared as that of an ancient and enormous tortoise, the petrified shell encrusted with lichen and emerald mosses.

Virgil was the first to arrive on the opener and stops momentarily at the cairn to put on his gloves. He remembered when his father had brought him here as a boy, on a September morning 40 years before, and how he had clambered atop the cairn to wait for his father to catch up. To this day he could still see him walking up the trail. To Virgil, the cairn stood as a personal memorial to the many years they hunted here together.

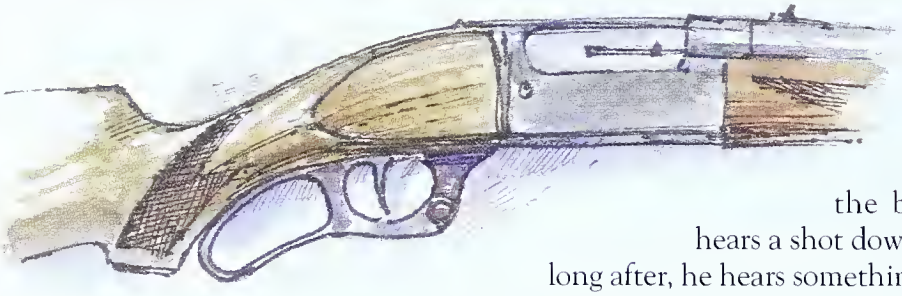
He slings his rifle over his shoulder and continues on then, halfway up, angles down a steep embankment along the creek and slips around the face of an enormous boulder. From there he can look across to a narrow bench on the other side where the laurel thinned. He had taken 19 deer from this stand, deer that had either skirted the edge of the rhododendron or had continued to move through the partial clearing in the thicket.

Beatty parks his old jeep next to a new '66 Chevy pickup, surprised to see that someone had arrived before him. Only a 20-minute drive from town, the hollow was a popular place on the first day of deer season. He had been hunting here since he was in high school, recalling, as he walked past the rock pile, the first squirrel he ever shot had been sitting on top of it. Far ahead, a flashlight angles up on the right, and he feels better as he heads up the slope on the left.



Throughout the morning, the usual progression of does head into the thicket past Beatty, and he lets pass a spike buck that he normally would have taken, determined to hold out for the big buck. His patience is rewarded when, late in the afternoon, he sees the bruiser buck sneaking down the hillside, using every bit of cover along the way. The deer is 75 yards uphill, and the gold bead of Beatty's .300 Savage floats on the shoulder, but his shot misses when the buck ducks beneath a tilted log. He levers another round, but the deer is gone.

It is very cold, and the black creek gurgles musically, echoing off



the flat wall of the boulder. Virgil is leaning back against the boulder when he hears a shot down the hollow. Not long after, he hears something running toward him. In the next instant he welds the crosshairs of the Hawk scope behind the shoulder of the big buck, and the .250 Savage barks. The buck never flinches, and after carefully checking his shot, Virgil finds that he had centered a thick rhododendron trunk.

Being the farthest back, the two hunters are the last ones out. They come down from each side of the hollow, and for the first time they meet face to face. Beatty is standing next to the cairn, unloading his gun when Virgil stops to do the same.

"Nothing like a Savage 99," said Beatty, seeing that Virgil carried the same rifle.

"I agree," said Virgil, "but I missed a big one in the thick stuff. Maybe I should have been using a .300 like yours instead of this little .250."

"How big was he?" asked Beatty. I missed a nice one, too."

Virgil hedged a bit. "Pretty big. You know, we could have missed the same deer."

"An 11-pointer?" asked Beatty.

"That's the one," said Virgil.

The hunters stop at a diner on the way home, where they begin to relate their encounters with the big buck and their histories in the hollow. As they talk they determine that if they hunt together, their chances of taking the buck would be better than alone.

The next morning they meet at the cairn to formulate a plan, and a new snow during the night has given them another tool.

"We know where the deer go into the laurel, but not where they come out," said Beatty.

Virgil's brow knits when he looks up through the pristine hollow. "How about if we push the laurel out together, then circle all around it, and see where they exit. Tomorrow, we can take turns posting at the exits while the other guy drives. We can chalk up today as a learning experience."

An iron sky spits sleet the next morning as Beatty watches a trail while Virgil dogs the brush. Three does trot from the thicket and filter out into the open woods. A minute later Beatty braces when he sees white tines moving against the laurel leaves, then eases up when a small 6-point stops and looks right at him. Beatty makes no attempt to shoot, having a pact with Virgil to hold out for the big buck.

In turn, the next drive produces a forkhorn that circles around Virgil then heads back into the laurel. A few moments later, he hears the heavy snap of a twig and spots some deer running hard. Two does squirt from the laurel, then for a split second the big buck hesitates behind a clump of brush; hesitant to follow, it turns back in. They would need a crowbar to pry him out, thought Virgil.

"We need one more hunter," said Virgil.

"We need an army," said Beatty. "Everyone I know is working."

For the next few days they try the same tactics, but do not see the buck again, nor do they even cut its large track. With more hunters about on Saturday, Virgil and Beatty switch stands. At day's end they coordinate schedules for the following week. Both had managed to get two more days off, and would also hunt the last Saturday.



They hunt hard, making short noisy drives and long easy drives; they hunt the flats above the hollow and even along the river that the creek flowed into, all to no avail. On Friday, they had worked their way to the far end of the hollow and have lunch. They talk about the lore surrounding the cairn, and about certain memorable times in the hollow as if they were old friends, and perhaps, in a way they were, as a shared geography bonds hunters who tread the same trails and watch the same ridgelines. They speak of landmarks; certain trees and waterfalls and crossings. Virgil finds it amusing that Beatty had long ago nicknamed the boulder by his deer stand "Gibraltar." They recalled the year of the great ice storm and the one of waist high snow and the frigid opener when sandwiches froze in their pockets. They decide to each take opposite hillsides back, nice and slow, to stay up along the ridgelines and meet at the rock pile at quitting time.

Virgil took the hollow all the way out to the sheer, rocky bluff that overlooks the woods road, and while making his way down through the rocks he kicks out several deer. Their beds are freshly cleaved in the snow, and he stands when a shot rings out from below. He hurries down the slope to the creek where Beatty, coming down the other hillside, meets up with him. They walk out to the cairn together, and see a hunter standing atop the rock pile, staring down at a deer.

"There's our hunter," said Beatty.

"And there's the buck," said Virgil.

The young hunter climbs down from the rock pile, his single-shot shotgun open, and together they walk over to the deer.

"More than likely that old boy would bed down up there all week, just watching us come and go.

"Real smart deer," said Virgil.

They congratulate the youngster and help him dress out his first deer. His voice cracks nervously when he tells them about his day. "The furnace broke and they canceled school, so I decided to go hunting. I was just walking down this road, going home. I live way down over the mountain. I look over and see this big pile of rocks and figure it's a good place to finish out the day, so I climb up there and sit down, and this buck comes walking along. He stopped right here and that was it. Then you guys come down. What is that rock pile, anyway?"

"Old magic," said Virgil.

"Don't let him kid you, it's just a pile of rocks," said Beatty.

They take the young hunter and his deer home, and tell him the lore and legend of the cairn. "Whatever it is, it's good luck to me," said the youngster.

THE FRIENDS STOP at the diner. "Well, that's that," said Beatty.

"Sure is," said Virgil. "What about tomorrow? We have one day left, and there's other bucks around."

"Hey, that's right. It's not over."

"I'll flip you to see who gets to sit on top of the rock pile."

"You better get there real early then."

FIELD NOTES

"Whitecap"

ARMSTRONG — I was checking a hunter during small game season when he mentioned he had been seeing squirrels that were a variety of colors. He hesitated, though, when he said he had seen a gray squirrel that was as white as my hair. He quickly added, "no offense." I told him none taken, because at this stage I'm just glad to have hair.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON



From the Top

VENANGO — Executive Director Vern Ross was assisting us with our deer decoy when an individual went by then drove back with a shooter sitting on the window ledge on the passenger side who shot over the roof at the decoy. When they were stopped and advised that they would be cited, the shooter was thrilled that the "top" man in the agency was citing him.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Better Forecaster Than Phil

SOMERSET — You know it's gonna be a mild winter when on January 4 the pile of paperwork on your desk is deeper than the snow outside.

— WCO STANLEY NORRIS, FAIRHOPE

Honest?

CLARION — I was walking out of a convenience store with a box of Krispy Kreme Donuts when I ran into a high school friend, Jamie Say. I was in full uniform and she made some comment about cops and donuts. All those donuts were for my deputies, Jamie.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, CLARION

New Challenges

I would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations that I've worked with over the past four years in Forest and Warren counties. I'm moving to Jefferson and Clarion counties, and look forward to establishing new relationships and meeting new challenges there.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Never Heard That One

YORK — Deputy Richard Snell and I were checking a hunter's license during deer season when we noticed that he had filled out his deer tag at some point but then erased the harvest information. When asked about it we were amazed at what he told us. "Well, officers, I had been seeing a 5-point that I intended to shoot, so I filled out my tag for it but then noticed that the brow tine was not an inch long, so I passed on it."

— WCO AMY NABOZNY, YORK

A Couple Pounds

BEDFORD — I was talking to an individual about a nuisance bear problem when she mentioned that she adds cayenne pepper to her birdfeeders to discourage squirrels. She said that it works and doesn't bother the birds, but that she sets out a pan of water for the thirsty squirrels. I wonder how much pepper you'd need to discourage bears?

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Shoe (Boot) was on the Other Foot

LANCASTER — Deputies Charles Bewley, Dennis Warfel and I were loading our deer decoy on the deer rack on my vehicle when a car pulled up behind us. It was the landowner who had given me permission to operate the decoy on her property. Expecting a friendly greeting, I was surprised when she began questioning me about where I had shot the deer, because she hadn't given me permission to hunt on her property. Fortunately, the landowner recognized me when I pulled back my orange vest and camouflage coat, revealing my uniform underneath. The landowner was relieved, and my deputies got a good laugh out of the WCO being thoroughly interrogated.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

Special Experience

BUTLER — As I instructed the hunter to fill out the tag for the buck he had just taken, the hunter told me he was shaking too much to properly fill it out. No, this wasn't a hunter that had just been apprehended for a Game Law violation; it was my son Cody, who on the firearms season opener had just taken his first deer — a 6-point buck. I don't know who was more excited, Cody or myself. Although he relished most of the experience, I ended up field-dressing the deer.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

Say It Over and Over

SOMERSET — Deputy Louis Fisher announced over the radio that he needed a "pull." Despite knowing that his vehicle was stuck, I asked him to repeat his request. A situation like that happens only so often, and when it does, it's nice to let everyone with a radio know. So, with great reluctance, Deputy Fisher again broadcasted his plea for help over the radio. I came right to his aid, and we both had a good laugh.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Had it Reversed

LANCASTER — WCO Jon Zuck supervised a new deputy, Dennis Warfel, do a hunter license check. Later, that same hunter traveled to a portion of the game lands where I was working, and told me that he had already been checked by my boss, who had a young deputy looking over his shoulder to see how it was done. I guess there's a price to pay for being a young looking WCO. I'll certainly miss Jon, who recently transferred to another district.

— DEPUTY CHARLES BEWLEY, LANCASTER



Fixture

YORK — I've received many reports of bald eagle sightings in my district, most of which are in areas where eagles have not been seen before.

— WCO CHAD R. EYLER, YORK

Good For Something

BERKS — I was checking some goose hunters on Lake Ontelaunee, when I discovered that one didn't have a Duck Stamp. I also found a small scrap of paper from his daughter in his license holder with the message, "Good luck, Daddy," with hearts and flowers drawn on it. After explaining the citation he would receive, the hunter, with a sheepish grin, asked if the note would get him anywhere. Maybe a Field Note, I responded.

— DEPUTY LARRY GALLAGHER, HAMBURG

Around the World

WASHINGTON — During the first week of deer season a woman called me and requested Game Commission coloring books. Normally I would have asked her to wait until after deer season, because I was so busy, but when I found out she wanted to send some to her son serving in Iraq to distribute to schools, I made a special trip and got her the books.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Came To The Rescue

PIKE — I would like to thank Angelo Santelli from Angelo's Bakery in Hawley for providing gourmet pastries to trap 11 bears near a trout hatchery. With all the fish they had been eating, regular doughnuts just didn't do the job.

— WCO JUSTIN KLUGH, PAUPACK



Tandem?

TIOGA — Dave Metzler and his hunting buddies were conducting a drive during bear season when they jumped a coyote, which drew a barrage of fire as it passed through the standers. A nearby hunter, watching the drive, assumed the group had been shooting at the bear that emerged from the woodlot they were driving and ran across an open field. Dave and his group would not even have known about the bear if the other hunter had not seen it, and the group jokingly wondered if the coyote took the "heat" to allow the bear to escape.

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, WELLSBORO



Might Be Chewy

BUCKS — Deputy Dave Bonham was checking duck hunters at Lake Nockamixon when he was informed that one hunter had a duck he was not claiming as part of his bag limit. After inquiring, the hunter reluctantly showed Dave a decoy he had shot in his excitement.

— WCO JOHN PAPSON, TRUMBAURERSVILLE

Old Enough to Know Better

CLINTON — On the second day of the general firearms deer season my deputies and I set out a deer decoy in an area where roadhunting is a problem. We cited quite a few individuals for shooting out of a vehicle at the decoy, including one 91-year-old fellow.

—WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Slow Time?

LANCASTER — After deer season many people think that WCOs have very little to do. Our routines may slow down a peg or two from the 10 to 15 hour days that are normal during deer season, but we're still plenty busy. There are many details that need wrapping up from the deer season, plus small game, archery, muzzleloader and trapping seasons. At this time many officers switch gears to an education mode, doing programs, working exhibits and outdoor shows. This is also when we do training.

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

Off Year

FOREST — After the second consecutive year with an almost complete failure of the mast crop, some wildlife populations have declined in this area. Most notably, squirrels, which are usually abundant here, were hard to find. I sure hope the mast crop rebounds next year.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Willing Partner

VENANGO — While assisting WCO Len Hribar with a decoy operation during the deer season, my job was to wait in the contact vehicle and issue citations to the violators. While WCO Hribar sat in the cold, watching the decoy, I received a "care package" of cookies and soda from the property owner. Needless to say, I offered to help WCO Hribar anytime.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, FRANKLIN



Oh, No

WARREN — On the last day of the regular firearms deer season I had a deputy prospect riding with me. We used a metal detector to find a bullet in a poached deer, investigated a house hit by a hunter's bullet, picked up roadkilled deer, cited individuals on ATVs with loaded firearms, posted a baited area and cited a man for hunting over bait. Later that evening the deputy prospect asked if this was a typical day. I told him that it wasn't; some days are really busy.

— WCO DONALD R. DAUGHERTY, GARLAND

Appreciated

YORK — On New Year's Eve I was at my desk, bogged down with paperwork that had been put aside during the extremely busy hunting season, and thought about how fortunate I and county citizens are for having a dedicated group of deputy WCOs. I wish to personally thank the deputies in all three districts in York County for their help in protecting our natural resources. So, thanks Rich, Vince, Ted, Kevin, George, Bob, Jim, Wayne, Pete, Jeff, Mike, Lew and Jeff O.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Not Yet

HUNTINGDON — I apprehended some individuals for killing a deer from a vehicle who turned out to be the third generation of a family I have cited several times for the same violation. They asked me if I was retiring any time soon.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Big Mess

PHILADELPHIA — Last fall, around 250,000 gallons of oil spilled into the Delaware River. In response, representatives from the Game and Fish and Boat commissions, USFWS Refuge Officers and Agents, and New Jersey Division of Fish and Game searched for fish and wildlife that had been affected. Many agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard, EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmosphic Administration, NJ and PA departments of Emergency Management, NJ State Police Marine Unit, Philadelphia Police Marine Unit and several contractors, have been working to clean up and investigate the spill. There were a few waterfowl hunters on the river when the spill occurred, and their dogs and equipment were coated with oil. Many of the affected waterfowl were treated at Tri State Bird Rescue.

— WCO JERROLD W. CZECH JR., PHILADELPHIA

Calendar Off

FOREST — It was a beautiful day as I patrolled the 9-mile stretch of road along the Clarion River. I saw canoes lazily drifting down the river, folks cooking on outdoor grills, children playing, bicyclists along the roadway, joggers and many couples walking along the picturesque river, enjoying the sunshine, blue skies and 60-degree temperatures. What's wrong with this picture? Nothing, except it occurred on January 1.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, MARIENVILLE

Wasn't Working

SULLIVAN — Charlie Bahr reported recently trapping the largest beaver of his life — a 68-pound bruiser. And to think the animal was on a strict low-carb diet.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Vicious Cycle

LYCOMING — I confronted a man who was illegally hunting on a prison grounds, and when I asked why he was there, he replied that he had been shot once while hunting, and figured he wouldn't have to worry about being shot on the prison property, because no other hunters would be there. I then asked him why, being so worried about being shot, that he wasn't wearing any fluorescent orange. He answered that he didn't want to be noticed, because he knew he was hunting where he wasn't allowed.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT

Some Things Never Change

MIFFLIN — I'm sure you enjoyed reading the Field Notes from the past, as I did, last year during the 75th anniversary of *Game News*. Although the job has changed over the years, as did the title (game warden, game protector, wildlife conservation officer), one thing remains the same — WCOs are more than happy to point out their fellow officers' misfortunes (all in good fun, of course).

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Puzzling

CENTRE — On the deer season opener Deputy Dave Sittler and I checked the licenses of a father and his young son. When I asked what they had seen, the father, who wasn't carrying a firearm, launched into a tirade about the lack of deer. When asked why he wasn't carrying a firearm, the man replied that he had filled all three of his antlerless deer tags during the archery and muzzleloader seasons.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, MADISONBURG



Step On the Scale

WARREN — WCOs can provide input into regulation changes, but we can't just change the "rules," as some people think. However, one day, as I bolted off a frozen beaver dam after hearing the sound of cracking ice, a new regulation I'd like to see enacted came to mind: All beaver trappers who use under-ice sets should be required to weigh at least 20 pounds more than the local WCO.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, PITTSFIELD

Hot Merchandise

ARMSTRONG — *Game News* is one popular magazine, and at $12 a year or $34.50 for a three years, it's a real bargain. I didn't realize just what lengths people would go to get their hands on a copy, though, until District Justice Samuel Goldstrohm told me that *Game News* is the magazine most likely to disappear from his visitors room.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, RURAL VALLEY

Deer seasons to remain largely unchanged for 2005-06

AT ITS JANUARY meeting, The Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits for 2005-06. As proposed, the deer hunting framework nearly mirrors that of the past three years, except for expanded antlerless deer hunting in WMU 5C. The late antlerless deer season for WMU 5C — and 5D — will be Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28. Other highlights include expanded hunter opportunities through the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP); more bear hunting; increased elk hunting; and new and expanded youth-only hunting seasons.

Public comment will be accepted on these proposals until April 25-26, when the Board will finalize 2005-06 seasons and bag limits.

"At this time, the Board has determined that we must stay the course in our efforts to balance the deer herd with its habitat," said Game Commissioner John J. Riley, who was elected as the new Board president.

"We also are giving preliminary approval to extra antlerless deer hunting in WMUs 5C and 5D, to provide hunters more opportunities to take deer, so we can continue to work to get the deer herd under control in this highly developed area. Managing deer in the southeast presents two major challenges. First, it is difficult for hunters to gain access to huntable lands; and second, what land is open to hunting continues to be threatened by development. We must, however, continue to use every available tool to get this area's deer herd under control."

Antlerless deer license allocations will be set by the Board in April, after the staff has had an opportunity to anaylze the results of the 2004-05 deer seasons, which will be available in mid-March.

Following is an overview of the preliminarily approved seasons.

- Antler restrictions will continue for 2005-06, and a concurrent antlered/antlerless firearms deer season will run from Nov. 28-Dec. 10.
- A firearms antlerless deer season from Oct. 20-22, for junior and senior license holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on



John Riley



Roxane Palone



Thomas Boop

AT the Board's January meeting, Commissioner John J. Riley of Scotrun was elected Board President; Commissioner Roxane S. Palone of Waynesburg was re-elected vice-president; and Commissioner Thomas E. Boop of Sunbury was elected secretary.

active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, who possess a valid antlerless deer license or DMAP permit. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach age 65 in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706.

- A muzzleloader season for antlerless deer from Oct.15-22. The flintlock muzzleloader season, set for Dec. 26-Jan. 14. Archery seasons, Oct. 1-Nov. 12, and Dec. 26-Jan. 14. Antlerless deer hunting in WMU 2B will be Dec. 26-Jan.14. Antlerless deer hunting in WMUs 5C and 5D will be Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28.
- The deadline for hunters to purchase a muzzleloader stamp for 2005-06 will be Saturday, Nov. 12.

In addition, the Board retained the use of crossbows statewide for bear and elk and during any of the firearms deer seasons — the regular 2-week concurrent deer season, the early muzzleloader season and the late flintlock season — and in all deer seasons in WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D, the most urbanized areas in the state.

Statewide, hunters using crossbows during the early muzzleloader season or late flintlock season must have a muzzleloader stamp in addition to their general hunting license and appropriate WMU antlerless deer license. Late-season flintlock hunters using a crossbow, though, will be permitted to take an antlered deer, or an antlerlesss deer anywhere in the state, with their unused antlered deer tag, just like other late-season flintlock hunters.

In WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D, hunters planning to use a crossbow during the archery seasons must purchase an archery stamp in addition to their general hunting license and appropriate WMU antlerless deer license.

Disabled hunters must obtain a permanent or temporary disabled hunter permit to use a crossbow during the statewide early archery season outside of WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D.

DMAP expanded to further focus hunter pressure

THE BOARD gave preliminary approval to an expanded form of the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). As proposed, landowners will be allowed to give up to two, up from one, DMAP coupons to a licensed hunter, who will then apply for the DMAP permits. This will allow hunters to possess up to two DMAP permits for a specific DMAP area.

Also, for 2005-06, the Board has proposed to expand lands eligible for DMAP to include: publicly owned lands; private land owners or lessees where no fee is charged for hunting; and private land hunting clubs estab-

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299
Southwest — 1-877-877-7137
Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674
Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107
Northeast — 1-877-877-9357
Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

lished prior to Jan. 1, 2000, that own their enrolled acres in fee title and has provided a club charter and list of current members to the agency. (Last year, private hunting clubs were required to own a minimum of 1,000 contiguous acres before being eligible for DMAP.)

Completed DMAP landowner applications must be submitted to the appropriate region office by July 1. Upon approval of the application, landowners will receive one coupon for each DMAP permit allocated for their property, and the DMAP permits will be allocated based on one for every five cultivated acres and one for every 50 forested acres. As in the past, landowners may receive more DMAP coupons if they present a deer management plan that is approved by the Game Commission.

DMAP permit allocations will be made separate from the general antlerless deer license allocations, but will follow the same fee schedule ($6 for residents and $26 for nonresidents).

The Board also gave preliminary approval to a regulatory measure that would make any DMAP permit holder who fails to complete and submit the mandatory harvest report and survey information from the prior season ineligible for future DMA)coupons/permits.

Bear season extension expanded to additional WMUs

THE 2005-06 statewide bear season is slated for the traditional, three days (Nov. 21-23) before Thanksgiving. For the extended season, though, the areas open to bear hunting during the first week of the firearms deer season has been expanded.

As proposed for 2005-06, in WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E bear season will reopen Monday, November 28 and run through Saturday, December 3. Last year, the extended bear season was open in only portions of certain WMUs. For this year, the Board wants to simplify this for hunters. The Board also gave preliminary approval to allow those deer hunters who obtain permission to hunt on the State Correctional Institution at Rockview, in Centre County, to hunt for bear during the first week of the rifle deer season, provided they have a valid bear license.

Finally, the Board gave preliminary approval to a measure to stop the sale of bear licenses once the 2-week firearms deer season begins.

Proposed elk season expansion

AT THE REQUEST of area farmers, the Board has proposed an elk season for late-September **2006**.

For the 2005 season, slated for Nov. 7-12, the Board approved 40 licenses (10 antlered and 30 antlerless). For the September 2006 season, Sept. 18-23, 10 licenses (2 either sex and 8 antlerless) have been proposed. While the 40 licenses for the November 2005 season are allocated for several elk management areas, the 10 licenses for the September 2006 hunt will be for Elk Management Area 1.

"Farmers are suffering severe crop damage, and rather than shoot the elk for crop damage, they would like hunters to have an opportunity to harvest the animals," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Farmers have told us that elk remain in their fields through the fall and do exten-

sive damage to their crops. After crops have been harvested, though, and before the regulalr elk season, elk leave the agricultural areas. The early, September season will help reduce the elk damage and provide hunters an opportunity to hunt when bulls are bugling."

In addition, the Game Commission announced that adjustments have been made to the boundaries of the 11 elk management areas. (Details will be announced in the future.)

Successful applicants for both the November 2005 and September 2006 elk seasons will be determined through public drawings scheduled this fall.

Two-bird spring gobbler season proposed

THE BOARD gave preliminary approval for staff to create a system for hunters to purchase a special license that will enable them to take a second spring gobbler in 2006. Fees are $21 for residents and $41 for nonresidents.

Under the proposal, which must be voted on in April before taking effect, hunters will be allowed to submit only one application for a special wild turkey license during a license year.

According to PGC biologist Mary Jo Casalena, research has shown that properly designed multiple-bird spring gobbler limits have not caused population declines in other states.

Expanded youth pheasant and goose seasons proposed

JUNIOR HUNTERS will enjoy a longer pheasant season in '05. In the past, the youth pheasant season was a 2-day event. As proposed for 2005, though, the youth pheasant season will be Oct. 8-14, along the same lines as the youth squirrel season set last year.

"The youth season takes into account that most students are off school on Saturday, Oct. 8, and Monday, Oct. 10, the Columbus Day holiday," said Vern Ross. "The remainder of this youth season, Oct. 11-14, takes place before the change of daylight savings time, which gives the students an opportunity to go hunting after school.

"Part of the Game Commission's overall mission is to promote our state's rich hunting and trapping heritage. The future of hunting and trapping is directly related to the continuing participation of young Pennsylvanians in our hunting and furtaking seasons. The challenge is to successfully compete with all the other activities and opportunities that vie for a teenager's time, and this expanded season is just one way we're addressing that challenge."

Under the youth pheasant and squirrel hunts, participants are not required to purchase a junior hunting license, but they must have passed a hunter education course. As with all junior hunting, those 12 through 14 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or other family member 18 years or older,

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

and those between 15 and 16 must be accompanied by a person 18 years or older.

In addition, the Board gave preliminary approval to a change in regulation that will allow the agency to hold special, youth-only waterfowl hunting days at Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas. The change, which must be approved in April, will allow for a special drawing of applications from junior license holders. An application for this drawing will be included in the 2005-06 Digest. Only one application will be accepted per junior hunter. The exact dates of the youth-only hunt will be decided later this year.

Acquisition of nearly 1,150 acres approved

FOUR NEW tracts, totaling nearly 1,150 acres, have been added to the State Game Lands, and one represents a new SGL, and is a particularly important wildlife area.

Clarion County: The Board approved the purchase of nearly 965 acres that will be designated SGL 330 — the newest SGL — from the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife for $289,500. Known as the "Piney Tract," this parcel was mined for coal several times beginning during World War I, and was more recently reclaimed and revegetated in 1979.

As a result, much of the area consists of gently rolling hills planted with various grasses and has become an important area for wildlife.

"The Piney Tract is significant because of the large populations of grassland-associated birds and the diversity of species that have occupied this area for many years," said Vern Ross. "In addition to the various game species, many species of special concern can be found on this same tract."

Dan Brauning, PGC Wildlife Diversity Section supervisor, noted, for example, that the Henslow's sparrow — a nationally rare bird — can be found in the hundreds on the Piney Tract. "This probably represents the largest concentration of Henslow's sparrows in the state," Brauning said. "Other state endangered and threatened species, such

ADAM HOSTETLER, center, of the Red Rose Lancaster Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, was presented with the Working Together for Wildlife Award for his leadership coordinating Middle Creek's National Hunting & Fishing Day, and for his, his chapter's, and his employer's support of the Lancaster County Elementary Envirothon. Presenting the award are Bert Myers, left, PGC Environmental Education Specialist, and Jim Binder, right, Land Manager at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.



as the short-eared owl, upland sandpiper and northern harrier, can be found on Piney Tract."

Additionally, Brauning noted that while grassland habitats overall are being lost at alarming rates, reclaimed minelands have become important refuges for many grassland animals. The Piney Tract is particularly important because of its large size, which helps reduce the impact of forest-edge predators, allowing birds to sustain substantial populations.

Dauphin County: The Board approved the donation of two tracts totaling 60 acres that are indentures to SGL 264, from the Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation. This acquisition is particularly important because it will allow the Game Commission and Dauphin County Conservation District to address acid-mine discharge problems related to SGL 264.

Center County: The Board approved the ratification of a 10-acre donation from M, M &V Energy that will provide public access to SGL 100, near Pine Glen.

Clearfield County: The Board approved the ratification of a 113-acre donation from M, M & V Energy that will provide protection to a portion of land along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River in Karthaus Township. This parcel will become part of SGL 100.

In other land management action, the Board approved three coal mining/reclamation leases that, collectively, are expected to generate more than $200,000 in coal royalties, more than $190,000 in timber revenues, and result in more than $150,000 worth of abandoned mine reclamation. Located on SGLs 100, 135 and 108, the three lease projects will run from three to five years and affect less than 100 acres. In a related move, the board approved an oil and gas lease on SGL 62.

Online harvest reports closer

THE BOARD approved a regulatory change that moves the agency one step closer to being able to accept deer and turkey harvest report card information online or through a toll-free telephone system.

"The Game Commission looks forward to being able to offer hunters a more convenient method of reporting deer and turkey harvests, maybe as early as the 2005-06 license year," said Vern Ross, Game Commission Executive Director "However, for the remainder of the 2004-2005 license year, including the upcoming 2005 spring gobbler season, hunters are still required to complete and mail in their harvest report cards within 10 days of their harvest.

"In addition to making it more convenient for hunters to report harvests, we hope to see reporting rates improve. The new process will reduce our costs of having harvest report card data entered, and nearly eliminate the $150,000 the agency spends on postage for the current harvest report card system."

Ross noted that it took a change in state law to permit the Game Commission to pursue this customer-friendly method of reporting deer and turkey harvests.

In other action, the Board:

- Gave final approval to a regulatory change that would eliminate the need for the Game Commission to issue paper permits to individuals who contact the agency to claim a road-killed deer to make use of the venison. Individual residents still will need to contact the agency within 24 hours of taking possession of the carcass, but the

agency will only have to verbally provide the person with a permit number.

• Gave final approval to a measure to standardize the bobcat application process.

• Approved providing a sample of hunting license holders and permitted regulated hunting grounds to Penn State University as part of a study on Sunday Hunting for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. All names and addresses provided will be used for this survey only, not for any other purpose.

• Approved an increase in the per diem rate paid to members of the Taxidermy Examining Board to $250 plus expenses.

• Announced the next scheduled meeting of the Board will be held April 25-26, in the auditorium of the agency's Harrisburg headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave. Other meetings set by the Board, all of which will be held in the agency's headquarters in Harrisburg, are: Oct. 2-4; and Jan. 22-24, 2006. Dates for the June meeting will be announced later.

Deadline for ads in 2005-06 Digest

LIBERTY PRESS Publications, publisher of the *Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting & Trapping Regulations*, has set April 1, as the deadline for the acceptance of advertising copy for the 2005-06 Digest.

Since going to a magazine-size Digest and accepting paid advertising in 2000, the agency has saved more than $400,000 in printing costs. Last year, the agency paid less than $13,000 for nearly 1.4 million Digests. Without advertising revenues, the cost would have been nearly $150,000.

In addition, the larger, full-color format, has enabled the agency to include in the Digest a "Hunting and Trapping Annual."

Ad rates range from $10,300 for a full-color page to $495 for a classified box ad. Promotional advertising does not constitute endorsement by the Game Commission or Liberty Press.

Those interested in advertising in the upcoming Digest may contact Liberty Press at 1-800-296-6402.

Proposed 2005-06 hunting seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, red, gray, black and fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, (no license required) - Oct. 8-14 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Squirrels, red, gray, black and fox (Combined): Fall Season - Oct. 15-Nov. 26; Late Seasons - Dec. 12-23, and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Ruffed grouse: Oct. 15-Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28 (2 daily, 4 possession). There is no open season for taking ruffed grouse in that portion of State Game Lands No. 176 in Centre County which is posted "RESEARCH AREA - NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (cottontail): Oct. 22-Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: For eligible junior hunters, no license required - Oct. 8-14 (2 daily, 4 in possession). Male pheasants only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B,

5C and 5D. Male and female pheasants may be taken in all other WMUs.

Pheasant: Male only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D - Oct. 22-Nov. 26. Male and female in WMUs 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4A, 4B and 4D - Oct. 22- Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Bobwhite quail: Oct. 22-Nov. 26 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in WMUs 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D.)

Hares (snowshoe rabbits) or varying hares: Dec. 26-Jan. 31 (1 daily, 2 possession).

Woodchucks (groundhogs): No closed season, except Sundays and during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1-Nov. 27, and Dec. 30-April 2, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and english sparrows: No closed season, except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season. No limit.

Wild turkey (Male or Female): Wildlife Management Units 1A and 1B (Shotgun and bow and arrow)- Oct. 29-Nov. 12; WMU 2A and 2B (Shotgun and bow and arrow) - Oct. 29-Nov. 19; WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D - Oct. 29-Nov. 12; WMUs 2D, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E - Oct. 29-Nov. 19; WMUs 5A and 5B - CLOSED TO FALL TURKEY HUNTING; and WMUs 5C and 5D (Shotgun and bow and arrow) - Oct. 29-Nov. 4. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring gobbler (Bearded bird only): April 29-May 27, 2006. Daily limit 1, season limit 2 (Second spring gobbler may only be taken by persons who possess a valid special wild turkey license).

Spring gobbler (Bearded bird only): Special season for eligible junior hunters, *license required* - April 24, 2006 [This will likely be changed to April 22 at the April Commission meeting]. Only 1 spring gobbler may be taken.

Black bear (Statewide): Nov. 21-23. Only 1 bear may be taken during the license year.

Black bear (WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E): Nov. 28-Dec. 3. Only 1 bear may be taken during the license year.

Black bear (Rockview State Correctional Institution) - Nov. 28-Dec. 3. Only 1 bear may be taken during the license year. Prior approval must be obtained

Fee for replacement hunter education cards

Hang on to your hunter education cards. On Feb. 1, the Game Commission began collecting a $10 application fee for issuing replacement Hunter-Trapper Education cards — and bowhunter cards. The fee, approved by the Board in October, will help offset the costs associated with processing and mailing the nearly 3,000 replacement cards requested every year.

The agency will accept check, money order or major credit cards (cash only if the transaction is conducted in person). The processing time is 10 to 14 days. Replacement cards may be obtained through the HTE Division, 717-787-7015, Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

from prison to hunt.

Elk (antlered or antlerless): Sept. 18-23, 2006. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Elk (antlered or antlerless): Nov. 7-12. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Deer, Archery (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Oct. 1-Nov. 12 and Dec. 26-Jan. 14. One antlered deer per hunting license year. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Nov. 28-Dec. 10. One antlered deer per hunting license year. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless deer (Statewide): Oct. 20-22. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, which includes the U.S. Coast Guard, only, with required antlerless license. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under Section 2706. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless muzzleloader (Statewide): Oct. 15-22. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlered or antlerless flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 14. One antlered deer per hunting license year, or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (WMU 2B): Dec. 26-Jan. 14. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (WMUs 5C and 5D): Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (Military Bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Detrick, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Proposed 2005-06 furbearer hunting seasons

Raccoon & foxes: Oct. 15-Feb. 18, unlimited.

Coyote, opossum, skunks & weasels: No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons. No limits.

Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 15-Feb. 18. One per permit. (Bobcats may only be taken by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Proposed 2005-06 trapping seasons

Mink & muskrat: Nov. 19-Jan. 7. Unlimited.

Coyote, foxes, opossum, raccoon, skunks, weasels: Oct. 16-Feb. 18. No limit.

Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31, 2006 (Limits vary depending on WMU).

Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 16-Feb. 18. One per permit. (Bobcats may only be taken by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Ohio

The state's first Youth Deer Gun Hunting Season in November 2003 proved extremely popular, with young hunters harvesting 5,325 deer, including 2,736 antlered and 2,553 antlerless animals (36 deer were not identified as either antlered or antlerless on the report forms) during the 2-day event. Incidentally, sales of Ohio's top three types of hunting licenses had increases in 2003: Youth, 16 percent; Non-resident, 16 percent; and Resident, 2 percent.

New Hampshire

Before the 2004 seasons there were approximately 85,000 deer. Hunters took 9,492 deer in 2003 — down 14 percent from 2002.

Pennsylvania

More than 78,000 pounds of venison was donated by hunters in 2003 to hundreds of food banks, churches and social services feeding programs for eligible recipients through the Hunters Sharing the Harvest program.

Waterfowl Harvests

More than 13.4 million ducks were harvested in the U.S. during the 2003-04 hunting seasons, according to estimates compiled by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Hunters harvested more than 3.8 million geese, up 13 percent from nearly 3.4 million the previous year. Mallards were the most prevalent duck in the bag, with more than 5 million birds taken in the 2003-04 hunting seasons.

Massachusetts

A bill will allow the state to use hunting as a tool to control its escalating moose population. Moose/auto collisions have been on the rise in Massachusetts, which is the primary reason for the bill's introduction. The bill now awaits debate in the House Ways and Means Committee. Since the early 1980s, several New England states have opened moose hunting, including Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire.

Oklahoma

Hunters took 100,602 deer in 2003 — up from the 98,581 taken in 2002. Muzzleloader hunters got 24,176 and archery hunters 13,326 deer in 2003. Osage County had the largest harvest, with 4,981 deer taken.

Illinois

There were 15 hunting-related incidents, including one fatality, in 2003. Five of the incidents involved people (victims) either falling from, climbing into, or removing, a treestand.

Woodcock

Throughout the U.S., woodcock hunters spent 522,000 days afield in 2003 and harvested an estimated 303,000 birds. The harvest was comprised of fewer first-year birds than average, which suggests that reproduction in 2003 was probably lower than normal.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Opportunity might knock only once in the deer woods, so when you encounter a whitetail in close quarters you better know what to do.

In The Clinch

"S-S-S-S-S-T. There's a deer," I hissed. My hunting companion and I were sitting on the same log, but leaning against opposite sides of the upright oak it had fallen against. I was after a buck, having filled my antlerless tag on opening day. My pal had both a buck and doe tag, so was looking for either.

This deer was the latter, angling slightly away from us, about 70 yards out. I dropped off the log, behind the tree, and told my companion to lean against the oak, to shoot safely past me. I waited, crouched, watching the deer. It wasn't a "chip shot," because the doe was moving between trees and among patches of brush and greenbrier. Yet, as someone who has lots of years of deer hunting experience, I couldn't help but think as the deer emerged into the clear and hesitated, "Shoot there," and again, "or there ... or there ...." No shot came, though, and the doe walked off.

Bob Steiner



I glanced at my companion, surprised. The hunter was just getting into shooting position, finishing the last of a very slow swivel. But by then the good chances were gone.

"What happened?" I asked. "Why did you take so long to get on target?"

"I thought I was supposed to move real slow when I saw a deer," came the reply.

"Not that slow," I said, then checked the edge of annoyance and my louder tone. After all, some of this was my fault.

I was with a young person who was comparatively new to hunting. I had forgotten that. This was the 20-year-old's third year of hunting. Living out of state, the hunter could visit only occasionally. Hunters that start at age 12 and hunt regularly have nearly a decade of experience by the time they are as old as my companion. I had forgotten that becoming an adult in chronological age doesn't equate with being an adult, in experience, as a deer hunter.

I blamed myself somewhat for the

WHAT DO YOU do when a deer is close, even looking at you? Several actions can take the hunter from a "caught-you-flat-footed" situation to making venison. It's a good thing this buck — a 6-point — is close, so the hunter can make sure he has "three on one side."

missed opportunity. I should have remembered that although we had hunted together briefly before, my companion hadn't ever had any sort of real shooting opportunity with me. I didn't know what the individual was likely to do "in the clinch," those last few moments when a deer sighting may or may not become a high-percentage shot, largely dependent on what a hunter does or does not do.

So we talked about it, in whispers, of course.

"If the deer had been closer, it would have been different," I said, "but that deer was far enough away that what you wanted to do was get on it with the gun, fast. Get the rifle up and against something solid, as a rest, so you're ready. You can't shoot until you're at that point, so get there."

I mimed the action.

"Get the deer in the scope if it's standing still or, if it's moving, get just ahead of it in the next opening. Put the crosshairs at about mid-body height and wait for it to step into view. Then adjust the crosshairs the little bit that's needed and shoot. If you miss the shot opportunity in that opening, don't follow the deer with the gun. Get on the next opening and wait again."

I wanted to compliment, as well as constructively criticize, so I went on.

"Sometimes you'll have to do what you just did, raise the gun slowly, especially when a deer suddenly shows up nearby. You might wonder how it can happen," I went on, "but someday you'll look around and a deer will just be there. Might be only 10 or 20 yards away. Might be looking right at you. That's a real close-quarters situation."

I smiled. The scenario I set up is always a tough one.

"If the deer hasn't run already, it doesn't yet know what you are and it might stand and give you a shot. Bring the gun up slowly and smoothly, and the deer may stay long enough for you to fire. Move quickly then and the jerky motion will spook it for sure. Another thing you can do when a deer is close is nothing, at least for a while. If your nerves can stand it, just stay absolutely still. With luck, the deer will turn its head and look the other way, or it may walk past you and you can shoot it going away. Trouble is, then you won't have the front end or broadside shot. The best you can hope for is quartering away. Get the shot in ahead of the hindquarters and angle up through the ribs and the chest, to hit the heart and lungs.

"Here's a trick I learned from archery hunting," I said. "It has worked on close deer with the bow, and it has worked lots of times when I was gun hunting. If you can see the deer's eye, it can see you. Try waiting for the deer's head to pass behind a tree before making your move. This works best if it's a tree near the deer, blocking its vision your way."

I continued. "Second best is when the deer goes out of sight behind a tree that's near you, blocking most of your motion.

Bob Steiner



No matter what our age, whether we're AUNT LINDA in the back, or college-age niece LAUREN, we can always learn to be better hunters, such as finding out how to turn a deer sighting into a successful shot.

Sometimes I just about get the bow drawn or my gun sights on the deer, when it reemerges. Even if the deer notices the last bit of movement as I go to full draw or settle the crosshairs, it's likely to stop and stare, which helps the shot."

I had noticed that my companion didn't seem to understand what I meant by getting a lean against the tree. So we did a little in-woods practice, checking first for more deer. I demonstrated several ways that the rifle could be positioned solidly against either side of the trunk.

"Suppose I don't have a tree right there," my companion asked. "I'm not comfortable shooting offhand."

"I'm not either," I said. "I'm a lot more accurate if I take a moment to get a lean. Sometimes this means taking a step to the nearest tree, before the deer gets any closer. I once shot offhand at a 6-point that caught me in the open. He wasn't that far, but I missed. When he took off, I looked around and saw that one step back was a tree I could have used as a lean.

"Sometimes getting a shot means I have to get down on one knee, so I have a solid rest," I said, slipping off the log and getting into that position. "One buck I shot, I had nothing for a lean, so I dropped straight down into a sitting position in the snow. I used both knees as a rest and, when the deer started to move out from behind the trees that hid it, I thought why wait? He went down with a neck shot. I had turned the scope up to a high power as I sat down, so the neck looked huge. That's another trick," I said, dialing my scope from 3 to 9 power. "If I have time, I crank up the scope so the deer looks bigger. I can see it clearer then, and I have better aiming because of the magnification. That lets me make doubly sure it's legal, too. At that point I take the safety off because I'm just about to shoot, within seconds. Just remember to flick the safety back on right away if the shot opportunity evaporates."

"Like it did just now," my companion said with a shrug.

"That's all right," I said, shrugging too. "It's more than all right. You're always better off holding the shot if it doesn't feel like it's a high percentage one. An opportunity can deteriorate quickly. It's important to know not only when the sight picture is improving, to a high point when the chance of making a quick, clean kill is best, but also when it's going downhill and you might as well let the deer go, because you're likely to miss or make a bad hit.

"If things don't work out in the clinch," I said, "the worst that happens is you don't get a shot. You also don't have to chase a wounded deer and you don't have to spend time looking for a hit you doubt you made. Hold the iffy shot and the next deer could be just around the corner, and you might get a better opportunity. It could appear any moment, any time you're watching. Which is what we both should be doing right now."

And we turned to stare into the vacant, but expectant woods. □

Cover Painting by Gerald W. Putt

OFTEN, especially when there's low cloud cover, you'll hear the drake wigeon's whistle before you actually see the ducks. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, they're there, and you had better be ready to shoot. Wigeons are nervous birds, quick to take alarm. Their flight is fast, irregular, with many twists and turns. When a big, open expanse of water is available, wigeons often raft up offshore until late afternoon, when they move to ponds and marshes to feed. *"Incoming" - Wigeons* is available as a full-color, limited edition Giclee print on canvas. The edition-size is 150 canvas prints, image size 24x16 inches. Price is $232 delivered. Order from the artist at P.O. Box 184, Boiling Springs, PA 17007. For more on Putt's artwork, visit www.geraldputt.com.

The Naturalist's Eye
By Marcia Bonta

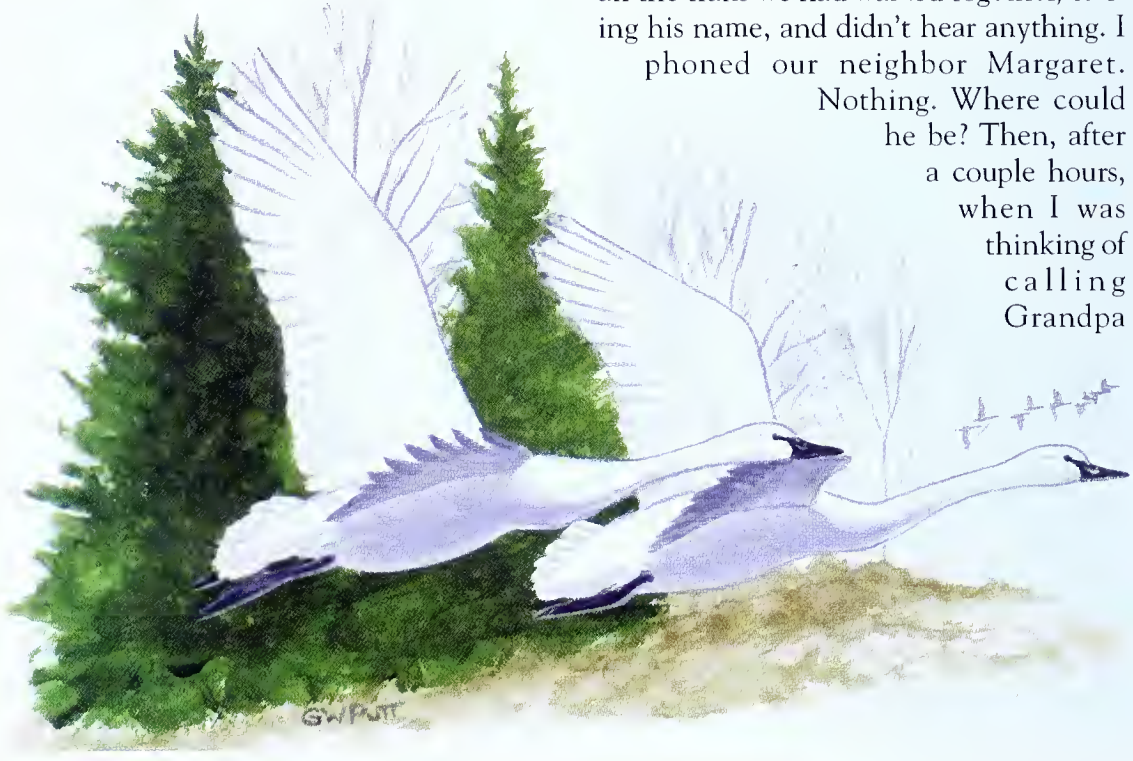
The boundless energy of youth had come to Marcia's mountain to pay homage to the last visage of winter and to welcome spring.

Blithe Spirit

SPRING CAME in on the March wind as the dawn chorus cranked into gear. Water streamed off the mountain and, in a few days, the snow and ice were gone. We were delighted to see bare ground again, but our granddaughter Eva was disappointed. Spring had long ago arrived at her Mississippi home. She had come here — in mid-March — to see the snow we had been telling her about.

She made do, though, with hikes over the thawing fields and woodland trails. She was especially anxious to reach the mythical (to her) Far Field. For years she had begged me to tell her the story about her dad and his hike to the Far Field.

"It was a beautiful March day, like today," I told her for the umpteenth time as we walked up First Field. "Your dad was only four years old. I went outside and called him, but he didn't answer. He was always singing and talking, and when I didn't hear anything, I was worried. I searched everywhere — in the barn, the shed, the guesthouse, the springhouse. I rushed down to our little pond. I walked all the trails we had walked together, calling his name, and didn't hear anything. I phoned our neighbor Margaret. Nothing. Where could he be? Then, after a couple hours, when I was thinking of calling Grandpa



at work or the police, I heard his voice. He came walking past the garage, his four puppies trotting beside him. 'Where were you?' I cried.

'I went to the Far Field with my puppies,' he answered."

"And," I concluded as always, "even though he had been there only once before, with me, he had found his way to the Far Field and back — almost two miles."

To Eva the story gave her both a sense of pride (her dad had been one amazing kid) and a sense of shame (she was almost eight and hadn't yet managed to hike that far with me). So on a clear, crisp morning we walked to the old familiar places — her favorite autumn olive tree in the middle of First Field, where we had played house, and the spruce grove where we had had little picnics beneath an active crows' nest. Our ultimate goal, however, was the Far Field.

Along the way we examined many vole runways and their domed, grassy nests in First Field. We stopped to pick up and admire two wooly bear caterpillars — one moving slowly over the field grasses, the other still rolled up in a ball — that her sharp eyes had spotted. Then we stood still and looked up at a flock of tundra swans flying low over the field, their white wings gleaming in the sunlight.

"I've never seen swans before," Eva said in an awed voice.Finally, we sat on Coyote Bench, "almost to the Far Field," I told her and promised her a couple surprises. Our hunter friend Tim Tyler had built two V-shaped "hides" on the ground and, as I suspected, both thrilled her. The first is in the woods beside the Far Field, the second on the hill above the field. Sitting on the ground against the tree that forms the back of each hide, the stacked branches on either side are breast-high on me but Eva, when she scrunched up, was almost invisible to the outside world. As far as she was concerned, they were perfect places to play and tell stories. But it was almost lunchtime, so we hurried home, full of the news that at last she had made it to the Far Field.

March nights were almost as exciting as March days. One evening a raccoon appeared below the back steps to eat fallen birdseed, its bandit face and busy hand-like front paws a revelation to her. A button buck also visited the feeder area frequently.

On another evening a woodcock performed, his wings whistling as he fell to earth over and over in the dim, dusky light and *peented* on the ground. All three of us — Grandpa, Uncle Dave and I — watched and listened with her. Although it was an old story to us, it was a brand new one to her, and the usually noisy, ebullient, little girl watched in hushed wonder. After the woodcock show was replaced by the star show, Grandpa pointed out the constellations to her as great horned owls hooted in the distance.

The Ides of March was a glorious day, warming up to nearly 50 degrees. In the morning Eva and I walked along Greenbrier Trail, where she collected a deer jawbone, ruffed grouse feathers and wild grape tendrils for her backyard museum that her father had helped her build in Mississippi. "Just like the one he and Uncle Dave and Uncle Steve had when they were kids," she said happily.

We continued on to Bench Blind hollow, where we sat in the blind to rest before continuing on through a Lilliputian forest of ailanthus to Witch Hazel Trail, where we threaded our way carefully down Sapsucker Ridge to Ten Springs Trail and the Ten Springs Extension. While I picked my way carefully over, she slid under the nest of five hurricane-felled tulip trees and triumphantly found her own way down the steep slope to our road. From there it was another mile back up to our house, yet she walked pluckily onward. Altogether, she had walked a rugged three miles, talking all the way.

In the afternoon, we packed a large thermos of tea, small yogurts, mixed nuts and fig bars, all of which I put in a pack on Eva's back. We also brought along a collecting bag and a foam camping pad. I spread out on the pad in First Field above the frog pond and rested in the sun, while Eva entertained herself by rolling down the hill as she yelled, "It's great being a child!" She was covered with bits of dried grass that clung to her brown hair and sweater. "The more dirty you get, the more fun you have," she concluded. Then she ran full-tilt down the hill, her pony-tail bouncing. I call her my blithe spirit.

Every time she visits, she's a greater joy, filled with questions and more self-sufficient, but still a wide-eyed child filled with wonder for the world, both human and natural.

The wind blew, crows cawed and the sun shone warmly on the field. I soaked in the warmth while Eva continued her rolling play. Once she returned carrying the jawbone from a dead deer that she had kicked apart near the frog pond. It was more fodder for her museum.

After an hour of me resting and her running, we headed downstream in our boots. It was too cold and early for salamanders and frogs, so she collected sphagnum moss instead, squeezing out the water, fascinated with still another (to her) unfamiliar life form. We also con-

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Color Bursts

Identify the predominant color that is associated with the wildflowers in each group, and then circle Pennsylvania's state flower, an unwanted plant and a late-summer bloomer.

Coltsfoot
Marsh Marigold ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
Trout Lily

Mountain Laurel
Trailing Arbutus ___ ___ ___ ___
Spring Beauty

Common Blue Violet
Round-lobed Hepatica (pale) ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
Loosestrife

Bloodroot
Lily-of-the-Valley ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
Dutchman's Breeches

Tiger Lily
Jewelweed ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
Wood Lily

answers on p. 62

tinued our tree identification lesson that I had started the previous day, adding beech, hemlock and white pine to striped maple, black cherry and black birch. Black birch she called the "root beer" tree and always begged for twigs to chew on like her dad did.

Slowly we made our way a half mile down the stream, crossing and re-crossing on rocks, until we reached a large, flat boulder that sticks out over the stream and forms a perfect tea table. "When your dad was little," I told her, "this was our favorite picnic rock. Once we even had a picnic there in the middle of the winter." That made it a special place for Eva, too, and we enjoyed our tea and snacks before trekking back home.

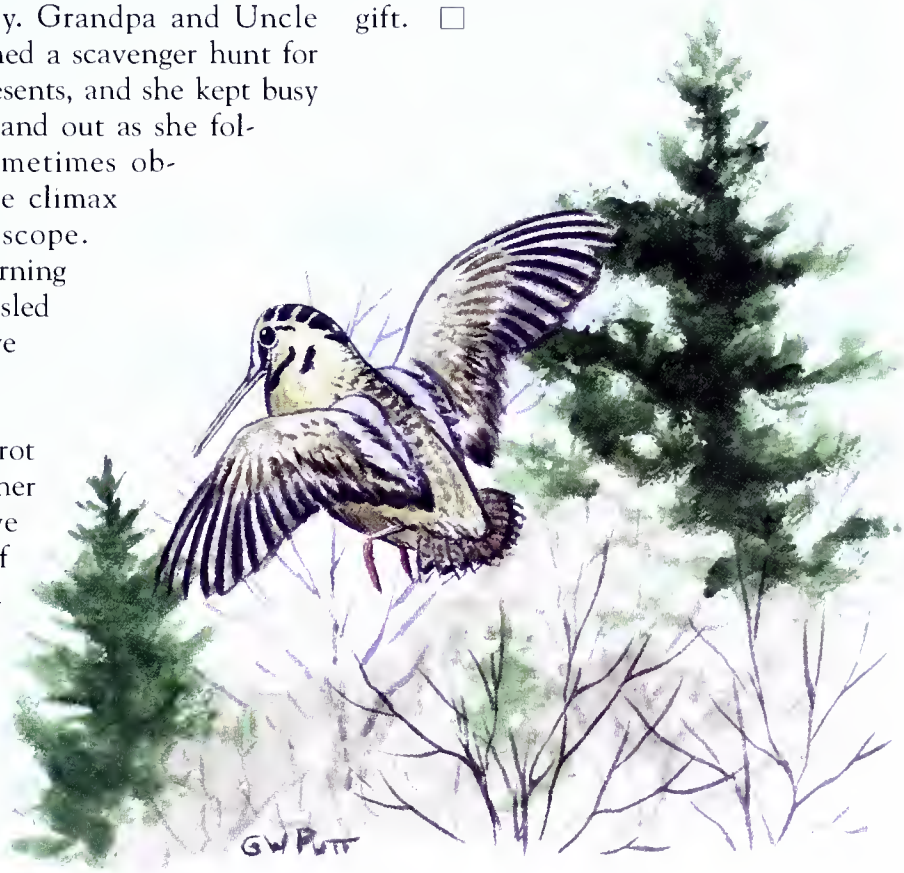
The following day — Eva's eighth birthday — it snowed. All my plans for the day had to be scrapped, but Eva was ecstatic. "I prayed and prayed and prayed that it would snow on my birthday and God answered my prayers," she exclaimed happily. Grandpa and Uncle Dave had planned a scavenger hunt for her birthday presents, and she kept busy running inside and out as she followed their sometimes obscure clues. The climax gift was a telescope. Later in the morning she went out to sled with Uncle Dave in the falling snow.

I baked a carrot cake for her, at her request, and we spent much of the afternoon watching the birdfeeders. A fox sparrow flew in and scratched open areas of seed that other birds used too — at least 50 juncos, 20 tree sparrows, 5 song sparrows, several white-throated sparrows, 5 cardinals and the other regulars. They gulped down food all day as the snow continued falling. In the midst of the storm, an eastern phoebe landed on the guesthouse porch and flicked his tail. He was right on time — but in the middle of a 5-inch snowstorm? What could have possessed him?

The rest of Eva's visit was snow centered. One day Uncle Dave allowed her to use a snow saucer a friend had lent us to slide down First Field hill just as he and his brothers had done when they were kids. I stood hidden off in the woods, my heart in my throat, as she spun downhill at a terrific speed, yelling all the way.

"My bottom left the saucer three times," she bragged later to me.

Another five inches fell a couple days later. March as usual, I sighed, wondering where spring had gone. But to Eva, winter's return was her best birthday gift. □



Straight from the Bowstring

By Mike Raykovicz

With any endeavor, we get out of it what we put into it, and bowhunting is no different — preparation is the key.

One Step At a Time

BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, the archery season will roll around and more than a quarter million bowhunters will once again head to their favorite deer haunts with the hope of putting some venison in the freezer. About one in four will fill their tags, and it's highly likely they will have several things in common. They will be physically and mentally prepared, have full confidence in their shooting ability, and know their equipment is functioning perfectly. Although dumb luck accounts for some deer taken every year, nothing beats preparation — and preparation begins now.





PRACTICING on realistic targets will hone your shooting skills on game animals.

Judging by the amount of activity at the local Pro Shop beginning around Labor Day and continuing until the Friday evening before the archery season opens, it's obvious that many hunters wait until the last minute to make final preparations. Personally, I believe success comes in small steps, and by preparing a little each day, months before the opener, we can all become better archers and, perhaps, enjoy more success.

Rather than waiting until the end of summer or even later, I believe March is a good time to replace or repair any equipment you expect to use next fall. Anyone thinking about getting a new bow should consider doing it now, to become familiar with the way it feels, handles and shoots. The bows on the market today are shorter, lighter, quieter, faster and have smaller

grips than those manufactured even only a few years ago. If you are shooting an older style bow, say one five or more years old, or older, you'll be astonished when you pick up one of the newer models. Most manufacturers have made big changes in riser configurations and, consequently, in the grip design for their bows, so it may take more than a few weeks to learn to shoot a new bow with confidence.

Buying a new bow in March also allows plenty of time to fine-tune sights, stabilizers, arrow rests, quivers and other accessories. For example, I used a one-piece detachable quiver for years and was satisfied with its performance and durability, and by the way it shielded my ultra-sharp broadheads. After replacing my outdated bow, though, I thought I would save money by using my old quiver. I was wrong.

While practicing my shooting, I like to keep everything the way I have it while hunting. This means I shoot with a quiver containing four arrows attached to my bow. After only a few shots with my new bow, it was obvious the new setup made too much noise. To correct the problem I proceeded to re-tighten the sight, stabilizer and quiver, but after returning to the shooting line, the bow still made too much noise. In an attempt to isolate the source of the racket, I hit each accessory with the palm of my hand. It wasn't long until I discovered my detachable one-piece quiver and the arrows it held vibrated like a tuning fork. I had to do something to correct the situation and, luckily, the fix was simple.

I replaced my one-piece quiver with a two-piece quiver specifically designed by the manufacturer of my new bow. Attaching the quiver brackets to factory-drilled holes located in the upper and lower end of the riser, I replaced the quiver and arrows then headed to the range. The noise was eliminated.

Some modern bows are drastically shorter than their predecessors, and the sharp angle created by the drawn bowstring can pinch the nock of the arrow, resulting in poor arrow flight. As a result, rather than attaching the release directly to the string, many hunters prefer using a string loop. A string loop just about eliminates broken servings and increases accuracy because the string is drawn the same way every time. Accuracy also will be enhanced because of a more level nock travel. If you are considering adding a string loop to your bowstring, though, do it now, so you have plenty of time to get accustomed to snagging the loop with your release aid.

Keep in mind that your current release might not work well with a string loop, and you may want to replace it with a new one. Be advised, adding a string loop to the bowstring may require a slight reduction in draw length and possibly a slight increase in draw weight to make up for the draw length reduction. In my opinion, the advantages of a string loop far outweigh any slight disadvantage, though, and I would strongly recommend using one to anyone shooting a short bow with a release aid.

If you are currently a finger shooter and are thinking of changing to a release aid, now is also the time to do it. A release will make most finger shooters better shots. If you are like me and have a harder time pulling a trigger than just letting go, there are release aids on the market that are held with the index finger and then released by simply relaxing the hand. It's like shooting with fingers, only better. Just keep in mind that you may have to shoot a lot for a few months before using the release becomes instinctive. Getting the jaws or the hook of the release to grab the string loop isn't difficult, but you'll want it to become automatic.

If you weren't totally satisfied with your shooting last season, March is a good time to begin shooting at least a few times a week. Once the snow is gone and the weather breaks, I try to shoot at least four times a week. Shooting outdoors in

March is not unlike hunting in late October or November. The cold and often windy weather requires me to wear the same amount of clothing I do while hunting. I find shooting at this time of year gives me more realistic practice sessions than I get when the weather is warm and I shoot with light clothes on.

If you are not serious about each of your practice sessions, then you're probably not accomplishing much. Bad habits are hard to break and, in fact, they can be reinforced by bad practice. It's easy to become nonchalant when shooting arrow after arrow. Shooting 50 or 60 arrows every day doesn't necessarily make a better shot. In fact, it could be counterproductive. If you don't concentrate on each shot, then the practice session is doing little good.

I try to take my time and shoot each arrow with as much care and intent as I would if I were shooting at a huge buck. Before releasing an arrow at a target or a deer, I tell myself repeatedly to take my time, pick a spot and follow through. Sounds easy, but unless this little litany is ingrained into the deepest recesses of your psyche, you could blow an easy shot, because good shooting technique hasn't been reinforced by good shooting habits.

Now is the time of year to work on your shooting form and on how you focus on the target. There should be no difference between focusing on a target or a live deer, but deer — especially big bucks — have a way of making us lose our focus unless we are deliberate in our concentration. This is why it's so important to develop a strong ability to focus on a target regardless of what that target is. Good habits develop into good instincts, and this is what every bowhunter should strive for.

For many years I thought I shot "good enough" to kill a deer, but that notion was dispelled by a champion archer I know. "Why settle for shooting 'pie plate' groups when, with practice, you could be putting arrows in the gold ring?" he once asked. As a result of paying attention to that advice I put my tag on the last 16 deer I shot at.

Few professional athletes practice 10 hours a day, one day a week, but rather in shorter sessions five or six days per week. With frequent shooting sessions I find I don't get physically tired, which causes poor shooting form and missed targets. More importantly, by keeping practice sessions short, I remain mentally focused on my shooting style, better developing my concentration.

I have a target set up in my backyard and my bow hangs just inside the garage door leading to the backyard. When time allows, I grab my bow, shoot about a dozen arrows and call it quits — at least until later in the day.

If you're not able to shoot in your backyard, outdoor ranges are the way to go. Outdoor archery ranges, often located at local sportsmen's clubs, offer a variety of targets, including 3-Ds often located in realistic woodland settings. The only problem is such a range may be located quite a distance from your home and, therefore, practice becomes less spontaneous. However, outdoor archery ranges offer the advantage of having a variety of targets available for more realistic target practice.

As hunting season approaches and I've grown confident in my shooting ability, I turn my attention to the equipment I'll be using once the season opens. Among the first things I check are my hunting arrows. Many archers these days are using a "shoot through" arrow rest, which means the arrow and fletching pass through the prongs of the rest once the string is released. This opening is rather narrow, and it's possible the fletching, especially if it is helically fletched plastic vanes, may make contact with some part of the rest or bow. This will almost always cause poor arrow flight, so it's important to address the matter before heading to your deer stand.

Most of the better arrows on the market today allow the archer to rotate the

nock so that the fletching passes cleanly through the rest, avoiding any part of the bow or cables. For example, Easton's XX78 Super Slam arrows feature a specially designed nock that fits snugly in a Super UNI bushing that is inserted into the arrow shaft. To properly align the arrow, the shooter simply rotates the nock so that the fletching clears all parts of the rest and bow. Carbon-arrow shooters enjoy the same type of nock system, especially with the introduction of the new internal component system by many manufacturers.

This should come as no surprise to most bowhunters, but broadhead-tipped arrows do not necessarily fly to the same point of impact as field tips. If you are changing hunting heads or have never shot your hunting head into a target to see where it strikes, don't wait until the last minute to do so. It may be necessary to go to a larger or smaller fletch, or to change rests to achieve perfect broadhead flight. Some broadheads, such as NAP Thunderheads, are aerodynamically excellent and usually require little or no sight adjustment when switching from field tips to broadheads.

If you bought new camouflage clothing, be sure to shoot a few rounds while wearing it. If the sleeve of the jacket is cut too full, it may interfere with your shooting. Don't wait until you get a shot at a deer to discover that your jacket interferes with your shooting. If it does, the solution may be as simple as wearing an arm guard to keep the excess material from interfering with the shot.

Even though modern bows are made better than ever, they still can gradually go out of tune, causing poor arrow flight and a potential miss in the deer woods. Strings and cables have a habit of slowly stretching and creeping over time, so it's imperative these be checked to see that the cams roll over at the same time and that the nocking point hasn't changed. I like to check the position of my arrow rest, nocking point and peep sight every few weeks, just to be sure everything is where it should be.



MAKING up a set of new arrows or repairing old ones is a good way to spend cold March evenings.

Finally, take the time to keep fit. As a group, we hunters are getting older, so it's imperative for each of us to make sure we're up to the physical demands of another hunting season. Bowhunting requires that stands be carried in and out. Scouting involves walking through fields and up hills or mountains, and removing a downed deer from the woods, all of which can be hard work. This could be daunting for anyone not up to the task.

To keep reasonably fit, I walk about 40 minutes a day at least three or more times per week. I walk up and down the hills near my home and find the exercise makes me feel better. I also try to work out about four times a week with light weights. By the time archery season arrives, I'm physically ready to place stands, scout new territory, or do whatever it takes to meet the physical demands of a new season.

Some hunters cram their pre-season efforts into the weeks, or days, shortly before the fall opener, but I believe by doing a little preparation each day throughout the year a hunter will greatly improve his or her chances for tagging a deer. Once the archery season opens, the last thing I want to worry about is my shooting ability, my equipment or my physical condition. Preparation is the key. □

By Jim Romanelli

You're at a crowded gun show and you spot that vintage firearm you've been seeking for years at a far table. After fighting your way through the masses, your treasure is finally in hand. Now, does the firearm pass muster? Here are some tips for . . .

Choosing a Used Firearm

I'M SURE we all remember our first brand spankin' new firearm. The sound of opening that crisp new cardboard box, the smell of the light preservative oil, and working the action for the first time. It seemed as though the new gun was custom made for us.

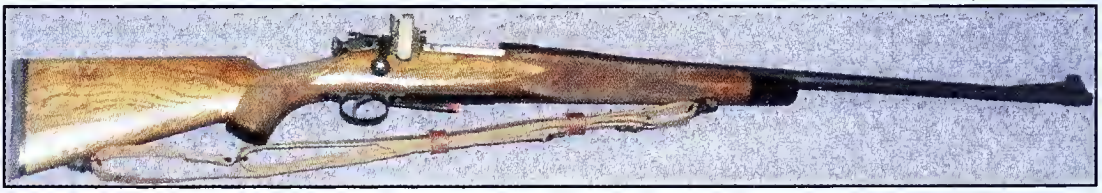
Although none of us is likely to forget that first new firearm, most of us have probably spent more time looking at, handling and buying used guns. Going to the used rack, a shooter can save money, find that special model that has eluded him for years, or just find something interesting to work on in his spare time.

Whenever I scan the used gun racks, I find that the firearms come in all sorts of conditions. Those that are pristine inside and out are a sign that means the gun either came from someone who knew how to care for it, or from someone who bought new, put a couple of shots through it, then traded it for something else. The only difference between a pristine gun and a new one is the possibility of just not having the box it came in.

A person can expect to save at least 20 percent on firearms in this condition, and there are a fair amount of them out there. (The exceptions are those firearms in the collector status that will at least hold and usually increase in value.)

Then there are those sporting arms with varying degrees of wear. The amount can vary from a couple of dents in the stock and a little worn bluing, to surface rust that is easily removed or a stock that is not badly damaged but needs refinish-

Jim Romanelli



THIS 1919 Springfield Sporter is an example of a used gun that is in excellent condition. If you pick up an old military arm, make sure the headspace is checked, and if need be have a gunsmith correct it. Being sporterized, the headspace on this firearm is most likely just fine.



Jim Romanelli

THIS Ithaca Model 51 semiauto shotgun is still operating but is in need of a serious facelift. A firearm like this, depending upon skill and equipment, might be a good project for someone who enjoys working with his hands.

ing. Providing that the actions are sound and the rifling is clean, this condition is perfect for someone who has a tight budget but wants a usable, accurate firearm, or for the beginner hobbyist who doesn't have to worry about the complexity of rebarreling, extensive polishing or metal work. The savings here, depending on condition, can range from 25 to 50 percent. And, with a rifle or slug shotgun, a scope may go along with it.

Last are those firearms that vary from being heavily used to being in bad shape. In some of the bad shape firearms, it's a case of abuse, in others neglect, and in others ignorance. A lesson here is that if it looks pretty beat up on the outside, it likely is on the inside, too.

Here are some examples of what I've encountered while working as a gunsmith.

An example of abuse occurred when a sportsman who, after each waterfowl season, brought in the same Model 870 in a deplorable, rusty condition, and year after year I'd polish and reblue it. The guy freely admitted to allowing his shotgun to sit uncovered in a duck boat all season. He just couldn't be bothered with taking the three minutes or so after every hunt to wipe it off and oil it a little. It would have saved him the cost of those reblue jobs, which actually ended up costing more than a new shotgun.

As for neglect, one day a gentleman laid down a canvas rifle case and said he needed a little repair done. In the case was a Winchester Super Grade Pre-64 Model 70 that looked to be in excellent condition. Turning it over, however, I noticed that the barrel and action had some serious rust and pitting, and that the stock had absolutely no finish, and even a little rot had begun to set in. Not surprisingly, the inside of the barrel on that side was in the same deplorable condition.

His firearm had remained in that case in the basement, where it got humid in the summer, for a couple of years. The only salvageable part of the gun was the action, and even that would have needed to be polished and reblued. Humid basements and attics are not good environments for steel, unless a dehumidifier is used. Cedar closets also seem to have a slow, detrimental effect on steel, causing the bluing to fade and the steel surface to turn

Bob D'Angelo



THIS ITHACA SKB Model 100 double barrel falls in the collector status. Made from 1966 to 1976, the shotgun, especially the 20-gauge, is hard to find and will only increase in value. The owner of this one found it at a gun show, after searching for this particular model for years. He was lucky to snatch it up as soon as the doors opened, and only after another potential buyer picked it up then laid it back down, not knowing the collector value it holds.

into an almost mottled look.

A firearm in that kind of shape is a job for the advanced hobbyist or professional gunsmith. It will cost a fraction of what it did new, and if time is not of the essence, then the work, in whole or in part, depending upon skill and equipment, becomes a therapy for those who enjoy working with their hands.

This last episode exemplifies ignorance. One afternoon a gentleman walked in with a Walther P38 9mm pistol and said that he couldn't get it to work. This was his first firearm, and after picking it up the week before, he shot it, cleaned it and put it away. But when he went to go shooting this particular morning, the action wouldn't open to chamber a round.

That sounded strange to me. After making sure the magazine was removed, I then tried to pull the slide back. It didn't budge, no matter how much force I used. I told him to leave it and come back in a couple of days.

On further inspection I noticed a slight brown tint at the back of the grip, at the junction of the rails. While wiping it with a cloth, I realized that it was rust, and I also caught a faint smell of olive oil. I immersed the gun in a rust penetrating bath for the afternoon. Later, I clamped the slide in a vice, then placed a hard plastic block against the back of the grip frame and gave it a good whack with a hammer. The frame moved about a half inch. Three more swings and it was free of the slide. The rails on both the slide and frame were covered in rust, and it took the better part of an hour, using graduating grades of wet and dry sandpaper to get it all off. The rails were salvageable, and the action rattled a little more than before, but the gun was shootable.

When the owner returned later that week, I diplomatically asked if he had used olive oil on the gun. He said that he put some along the rails, because a friend had told him that after he cleans it with a solvent, to use whatever oil he had around the house on the rails so it would work more smoothly. Well, with an honest answer like that, I realized that this first-time gun owner knew absolutely nothing about basic gun care. I handed him small sample bottles of Hoppe's solvent and oil, along with a small booklet on basic gun care, and explained that olive oil is not quite the same as gun oil and is best left for culinary purposes.

Now, let's get into what to look for when a used firearm catches your eye. As long as you're satisfied with the external condition of the firearm, here are a few tips for deciding whether or not it's for you.

With any firearm, the action should work freely without any kind of binding. In the same vein, it should not rattle like a bucket of bolts when closed. Most guns have a certain amount of play, such as the bolts of wartime bolt actions when the action is open, but they shouldn't budge when closed and cocked.



Bob D'Angelo

HERE'S another firearm that is highly collectible. It's a Savage Model 99 lever action in .250 Savage. Plenty of these rifles are around in .300 Savage, but the .250 is more difficult to find. The owner found this one on an Internet firearm auction site, and had it shipped from across the country.

As far as handguns go, the slides of semiauto pistols will have a very miniscule amount of side play. Most of the time it's not discernible by those new to shooting, though.

Cylinders on revolvers will have a hint of rotational play, because the cylinder bolt never completely fills the corresponding cuts in the cylinder. There may also be a slight bit of back and forth play, too, which is normal. There should be only a hint, though, if any, side to side movement.



Jim Romanelli

THIS used Colt Anaconda .44 Magnum revolver is in excellent condition. It would make a fine addition to a gun collection if the price is right.

The flash gap between the front of the cylinder and the rear of the barrel should be between .004-.008 of an inch. Sometimes on heavily used revolvers, or those of poor quality, you'll find a .010-inch gap, which is borderline. If I see .010-inch or more, it's time to set the barrel back one turn and recut the gap and cone. The best way to measure this gap is with feeler gauges, which can be found in automotive stores or gunsmithing catalogs. Some gunshops will have feeler gauges for their own use, so asking a dealer to measure the gap wouldn't be unreasonable. In a pinch, I've used the sharp corner thickness of a crisp dollar bill folded in half (which is .009-.010). As long as that flat folded corner doesn't slide in, I figure the gap is okay.

Unless a revolver has seen some excessive handloads or abuse, the cylinder of double actions should swing out freely and close tight without having to be forced. Single action cylinders should spin freely only in a clockwise direction, and not at all when the loading gate is closed for Rugers, or the hammer is fully down for traditional single actions.

Every once in a while I've noticed longitudinal cracks in cylinders and/or the forcing cone, due to the use of excessively hot handloads, so be sure to check these areas closely. Also, the cylinder bolt (for either single or double action) should always lock into all the cylinder cuts before the hammer is brought back to full cock. This assures that the timing allows the cylinder to be locked in place prior to the hammer falling when firing a round.

Another immediate thing to look for on used firearms is whether the safety is in good working condition. By that, I mean when a safety is placed in the "on" position and the trigger pulled (don't put the death squeeze on it), the hammer/firing pin does not release. Also make sure that when taking the safety off, it also doesn't fire. There is nothing more nerve racking and dangerous than having a firearm go off sooner than intended, especially in the direction you don't want. Of course, make sure the firearm is unloaded before performing such a test.

When dealing with external hammers, make sure that they stay put when the trigger isn't pulled. What I normally do (after opening the action and making sure it's empty, of course) is to cock the hammer then apply a little thumb pressure to the back of it. If the hammer stays, that's a good thing; if it slips off, then advise the owner and hand it back.

When working with internal hammers/strikers (bolts, some pumps and semiautos), work the action, then bump the butt of the rifle from a few inches off the floor (only to those guns with recoil pads, or you might break the plastic buttplates or scar the steel ones) or hit it with the heel of your hand to make sure it doesn't go



Bob Mitchell

BECAUSE of the checkering and ivory inlays and pistol grip, this customized 1930s-era Winchester Model 75 target rifle won't appeal to collectors, but it was quite the value for the shooter who enjoys spending time on the target range and in the squirrel woods. Here it's topped with a Lyman 10x All-American with an adjustable objective and a half-minute dot reticle.

off (don't drop pistols on the floor).

Next to check is the barrel. Look down the barrel from both the breech and muzzle, to view the condition of the chamber and rifling. To do this use either a bore light or a white piece of paper at the other end, to reflect the light. Check for bulges, rings and pitting, which are caused by hot handloads, barrel obstructions or neglect. If you can't look down the breech end, but the rifling looks good from the muzzle, then it's a pretty safe bet that the chamber is in the same shape.

Some shooters have asked me if they should use a bore scope when looking at used firearms. While a tremendous tool for barrel makers and gunsmiths, a bore scope can be a hindrance for those who are not familiar with what they're looking at. A barrel that hasn't been thoroughly cleaned will show a lot of deposits that may be mistaken for erosion. In fact, some of those deposits may even enhance accuracy, because they have coated over an imperfection in the barrel. Many firearms actually shoot better after a couple of fouling shots, because those first few rounds condition the rifling.

If you look hard enough through a bore scope, all rifling will show imperfections, so a good rule of thumb is that if the rifling looks clean with the naked eye, then it probably is in good shape, especially for a hunting firearm. I have seen dark bores from older rifles shoot better than expected (under two MOA). A dark bore could be a condition of erosion from old corrosive priming and propellant that has never been cleaned well enough.

So an imperfect bore or rifling doesn't necessarily mean poor accuracy. Years ago I had a Winchester Pre-64 Model 70 in .22 Hornet that had clean rifling, with the exception of a little throat erosion that was visible beyond the chamber for the first inch. Even with that less than perfect bore, it consistently shot groups under an inch at 100 yards.

If the rifling/chamber of a rifle, or barrel of a shotgun, looks like it's seen better days, I like to pull a bore snake through, just to make sure that what I'm seeing isn't accumulated dust or coagulated oil/lubricant. Also, look at the condition of the breech block/bolt face (recoil shields for revolvers) for wear and pitting. Many older firearms (pre-1960s) may show pitting around the firing pin hole due to the older, corrosive priming, or even metal cutting from a diet of excessive handloads. If the breechblock is pitted, then you can pretty much bet that the firing pin might be in the same condition.

Take a good look at the muzzle. You

Fun Game answers:

yellow, pink, purple, white, orange; mountain laurel, purple loosestrife, jewelweed.

will probably see signs of normal wear, but make sure there are no dents or burrs where the crown meets the rifling. Any imperfection at that junction can really have a negative impact on accuracy. A less than perfect muzzle is not a major obstacle, though, because it can be easily recrowned by a gunsmith.

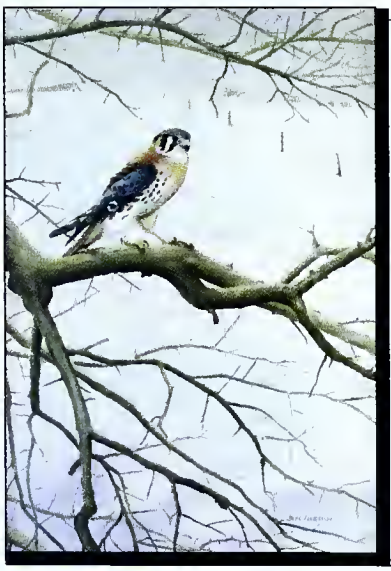
When examining a used firearm I always like to ask whether the headspace has been checked. Headspace is the minimum/maximum space a cartridge can expand inside the chamber, when the cartridge is fired.

Too little headspace and the cartridge won't chamber. Unless someone did a lousy rebarrel job and didn't check it with a headspace gauge, you'll seldom find this condition on a used gun. Too much headspace gives the cartridge case too much room to expand in the chamber and, therefore, can render the firearm unsafe to fire. About the only time there would be excessive headspace is from a diet of hot handloads, or from trying to fire through a bore obstruction.

Proper headspace is determined with "NO GO" and "GO" gauges. A little advice here is that many military firearms, such as Mausers, Enfields and Springfield '03s, were given a more generous chamber, so they would be able to fire under battlefield conditions. These were passed by a military "field" gauge, which deemed it safe enough to shoot factory ammunition, but may fail a commercial NO GO gauge. So if you pick up an old military firearm, make sure the headspace is checked, and if need be, have a gunsmith correct it.

For the average sportsman, that's pretty much it as far as what to look for when examining used firearms. As far as checking prices, there are reference materials such as *Gun Trader's Guide* by Stoeger, *Modern Gun Values*, *The Blue Book Of Gun Values*, *Flayderman's* and a few others that have grading and percentage values for the condition of firearms. These books are more or less guidelines as to what to expect when looking. Sometimes the prices vary, but these references are a great place to start. Another place to look these days is on the Internet, at any of the various sites where firearm auctions and sales can take place.

Used sporting arms are a great alternative to buying new, because the majority of them are in good condition. The trick is to educate yourself and do a little looking around before you buy the one that fits your needs and budget. □



SOMETIMES you'll spot one on a utility line or fencepost, but no matter where you see one, they're a neat looking bird of prey, with their black cheek patches, bluish wings and reddish-brown back. The American kestrel is the smallest raptor in North America. Also known as a "sparrow hawk," the kestrel is actually a falcon, and it's more likely to prey on large insects and small rodents than sparrows.

Artist proofs are available of January's cover, "Peaceful Pause," painted by Mark Anderson. Image size is 12 1/2 x18 inches and the price is $90, delivered. Send check or money order to Mark Anderson, 348 Deer Creek Valley Road, Tarentum, PA 15084.

Flow



MAKING MY WAY to my deer stand by moonlight, I disturb a flock of roosting turkeys. With every few steps, a bird pitches out, powerful wings slapping branches as it clears the canopy. So much for a quiet approach. I wait a few minutes then creep silently along, but another rockets out, slices across the moon, and sails down into the hollow.

My stand is in the contorted fork of a windfall, one trunk serving as a stool-height seat, the other as a shooting rest. I hope that the commotion of the turkeys didn't alarm the deer too badly. When I put on my gloves, a grouse flushes from the opposite end of the windfall, curving into a hemlock hideaway.

Right at daybreak, several deer round the steep hillside below. They flow through the thicket so beautifully, slipstreaming through the maze of vines and saplings with the same undulating grace of dolphins stitching a seam between breakers. None offers a shot.

There's a great glut of grapes this year, and everywhere robins argue, chase and gorge. Three gobblers gobbling up grapes swing wide around my position. Other birds round the hillside; a downy woodpecker pecks at a goldenrod gall, while several chickadees flit and cling acrobatically to milkweed stalks, unloosing a few silky parachutes that lend a festive air to their progress. When a line of geese flies up the hollow, I realize that everything I have seen is moving clockwise around the hill, as if I were standing at a pivotal hub with the forest streaming around.

Later in the morning, a counter-movement begins; the earth coming round the other way. In fits and starts, a red squirrel comes down the shooting rest trunk until it is only inches from my arm. It detours by leaping to a sapling and springing back onto the trunk. Next, a long-legged button buck with cowlicks on its forehead emerges from the witch hazel. It stops and tests the air time and again, then continues on into the thicket, only yards from my stand.

Two more deer pick their way uphill, weaving a circuitous course through the grape tangles. At my shot everything momentarily slows, commencing then as I make my way to the large doe stretched out on the leaves. After dressing out the deer, I wash my knife in a seep that trickles from high up the slope. Robins splashing in the laddered pools freeze when a red-tailed hawk passes low overhead. The hawk wheels, and a brace of gray squirrels scrambles to the opposite side of a nearby oak. The press of life here urges me to finish, to hitch to the flow. I tie on my rope and begin the drag around the hill.

The aroma of Swiss venison steaks rises from the kitchen, drifts through the dining room, rounds the corner and wafts up the stairs to my studio, much in the way the deer worked its way up the hillside. I am reminded that there is no halt in the order of things, no adjournment, no cessation; only a shifting, a transference of momentum. Once again, I am stirred to move. I lift the lid, ladle the juices over the steaks, and wait.

Bob Sopchick

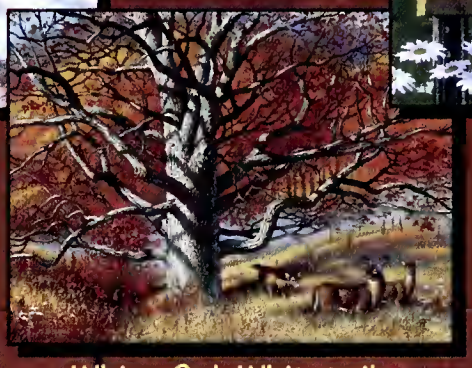
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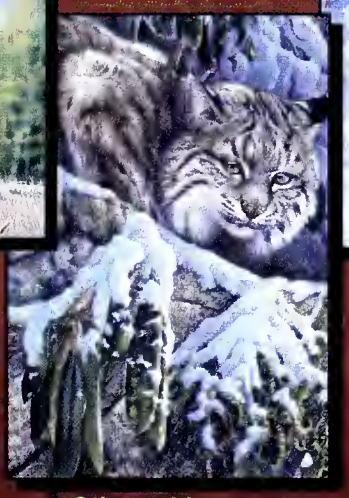
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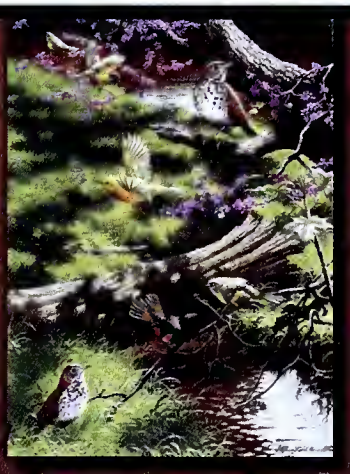




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From the Executive Director

Dear *Pennsylvania Game News* Readers:

As a long-time subscriber, I have come to enjoy *Game News*' interesting articles, timely information and wonderful artwork. As the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, I am honored to have such a publication serve as the primary communications tool for our agency's programs and projects, our Commonwealth's hunting and trapping heritage and our shared experiences afield.

We have been pleased to have so many subscribers to this magazine, as well as the many complimentary subscriptions we provide to schools, libraries, outdoor writers, legislators and other government officials, deer processors and landowners enrolled in our public access programs (Farm-Game, Forest-Game and Safety Zone).

Unfortunately, at this point in the Game Commission's history, we are facing ever-tightening budgets. This fiscal year alone, we already have identified several cost cutting measures, and we need to cut more before the end of June. When the 2005-06 fiscal year begins on July 1, the budget will be even tighter.

Some examples of spending reductions include: eliminating toll-free numbers in our region offices; drastically cutting travel and training budgets; temporarily closing the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center; delaying or forgoing the purchase of important equipment; reducing the number of pheasants raised and released by 50 percent of the 2004 level; and reducing services that would have required overtime.

While license sales have remained relatively steady — and in some cases seen a modest increase — we have seen a decline in other areas of revenues. Also, we have experienced increases in expenditures that we have little to no control over — such as utility rates, gasoline prices, in-lieu of tax payments on State Game Lands and personnel costs.

Until the Game Commission receives approval for additional revenues, we must include the complimentary subscriptions to *Game News* in our cost cutting efforts. Printing and mailing of complimentary issues costs the agency $168,485 per year. So, this is the last complimentary issue that we will be mailing to schools, libraries, outdoor writers, legislators and other government officials and deer processors.

For landowners enrolled in our public access programs (Farm-Game, Forest-Game and Safety Zone), the last complimentary magazine will be the May 2005 issue.

It is not an easy decision to include these complimentary subscriptions in our efforts to reduce agency costs. But, I can assure you that once the agency is able to receive either an increase in license fees or some form of alternative funding we will revisit the issue of complimentary subscriptions.

For those who value *Pennsylvania Game News* as much as I do, I hope that you consider purchasing a subscription. You can do that by going to the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) and clicking on "Subscribe" in "The Outdoor Shop" box, or by completing and mailing the form on page 55 of this issue.

Sincerely,
Vernon R. Ross
Executive Director

letters

Editor:

Having just completed my 43rd season, it has been my good fortune to have taken nearly every species available here, and I've enjoyed every opportunity to spend time in Penn's Woods. This past season was no exception. From October through January I spent more than 30 days in the field, and I have never had a more enjoyable deer season. I saw the biggest antlered deer I've ever seen, but he never offered a shot, and I saw forest regeneration where I've never seen it before, and I did have an opportunity to take a deer, if only I could have held my flintlock more steady.

I've also heard grumbling from those who want more deer and those who want less. In my opinion, the Game Commission has done an outstanding job of managing our wildlife, including deer, and that there are more opportunities for hunters and trappers than at any time in my life.

L. McKeirnan, Jr.
Email

Editor:

A year has now elapsed since you published the two articles on the early years of my father's career with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and I can't get over how well received they were. I'm still receiving an occasional compliment, and along with the many I received from Pennsylvanians, I also heard from readers in Montana, Arizona, Florida, Ohio and West Virginia.

I was most intrigued with the article about Dave Titus in your February issue, as he and my father were classmates and shared many experiences. When I read about Mr. Titus receiving a telephone call, I recalled my father learning of his acceptance to the training school via a telegram. For a moment I wondered why the Game Commission would use two different methods of communication, but then I remembered that my grandparents never had a telephone: hard to imagine in this era of the cell phone.

L. Sprankle
Tipton

Editor:

Just a short note to say I really enjoy *Game News*. When I finish reading it, I send it to my son in the Army, and he shares it with fellow soldiers. Two groups of soldiers who have never been to Pennsylvania are planning to come here hunting when they get home.

E. Wills
Meadville

Editor:

On the "Letters" page in the March issue you mentioned that the Game Commission is working to set up a computer based license sales system and that back tags will be replaced with tags hunters may carry in their wallets or pockets. In my estimation, this is unwise. Without a back tag number, it will be much harder for WCOs, and sportsmen, to identify game law violators.

J. Silverstein
Verona

Editor:

What a fine tribute to Dave Titus, by Steve Sorensen, in the February issue. As an officer, Dave led by example in a very effective but unassuming way. I consider myself very fortunate to have been assigned to Dave in 1962, as a student officer.

Thanks, Dave, and Mr. Sorensen.

K. Hess
Mechanicsburg

Editor :

Unable to download SGL maps from your website, I grew increasingly frustrated and finally emailed your website. In response, I heard from your webmaster, Chas Haas, and his directions had me downloading maps in no time. Thanks, Chas, your help was most appreciated.

D. McCandless
Grove City

Thanks

As this is being written, the March issue has been out only a week or so, and we have already received more than 600 completed "Deer Hunter" surveys. Thanks for your interest.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Work the birds, use your woods savvy, get 'em close, and . . .

When He Gives You the Eye

By C. Dennis Ziegler

"YOU HUNT what county?" I asked Chuck Nyce during lunch at North Penn High School back in the fall of 1969.

"Perry."

"Where's that?"

"West of Harrisburg, 2½ hours from Lansdale," he replied.

"Any deer out there?" I asked.

"Not as many as Tioga, where you and Mike Bishop go, but there are turkeys there."

"Wild turkeys," we said in disbelief. Mike and I thought turkeys were found only in the southern states. Until then, we didn't know anyone that had even seen a turkey in Pennsylvania, let alone killed one. That would change.

Coming back to Lansdale in 1974, after serving three years with Uncle Sam, I called Chuck to catch up on lost time. He told me he had bought property near Mannsville, in western Perry County, that had a small cabin on it. Being an avid turkey hunter and trapper, Chuck had no problem sharing his knowledge on both subjects, and we became good friends. I tried to paint a mental picture as I listened to Chuck talk about his hunting experiences throughout the state. Horse Valley, Tuscarora, Shade and Black Log mountains, Honey Grove, Reeds Gap, Juniata, Mifflin and Huntington would become my classrooms for the next four years.

So weekends were spent following Chuck and his friends hunting, fishing and learning about turkeys. When I talked with hunting friends in Lansdale, they were envious and wanted me to convey what I had learned about turkey calling and hunting, and how to make turkey diaphragm calls.

Early one Sunday morning in early April 1975, before the season, Chuck and I traveled to the northwest side of Shade Mountain. It was clear, cold and still as we heard the train coming from Lewistown, some 20 miles north. The turkeys heard it, too, as the gobblers were sounding off. We had heard a lone gobble about 20 minutes earlier from the road, so Chuck grabbed the tape recorder and we headed up the mountain to see if we could get above them. It began to get light as I sat on the side of the mountain, surrounded by old fallen chestnut logs. Chuck whispered to me to cover my boots with leaves and to not move. I looked up and there in the half-light was a flock of turkeys silhouetted against the morning sky. Turkeys started to call to each other from the roost. Hens flew down with the jakes close behind. Due to the steepness of the mountain, the turkeys were at eye level, and what a spectacle unfolded before me. When Chuck yelped on his mouth call the woods exploded with gobbles. Three jakes ran within 12 yards


OBLESKI

of us and then two longbeards came into view. Chuck cackled and the toms double- and triple-gobbled. And I got goose bumps and the hair on the back of my neck stood up. The jakes were so excited they were bumping into each other to try to find the hen.

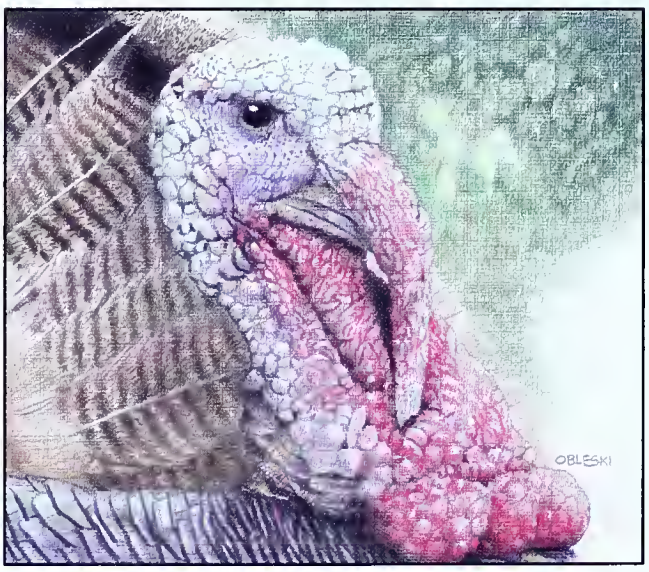
Our spot on the mountain was filled with turkey music, but then an owl flew by and an old hen putted, and then the air was filled with "B-52s" heading down the mountain. Chuck rose slowly and slid down to the tape recorder and flipped the tape over. Just as he started to speak, a deep gobble came from down the mountain. Chuck whispered to me, "You call this one in."

To say I was nervous would be an understatement, but when the gobbler was 100 yards out, I gave a kee-kee run call on my diaphragm and he came within 25 yards. I gave a feeble cackle and he went into full strut, his head, changing color like a neon sign. He strutted and pirouetted closer and closer, and I thought he'd end up in my lap. He turned sideways and extended his "periscope," and then he was gone. Chuck said he had spotted the brown bottom on my new boots. I remember to this day the 12-inch beard the gobbler had.

When we got back to the truck, Chuck's friend, Chet Lesh, was waiting there. He told us he had heard the whole episode from the road. I let Chuck do the talking, while I listened to every word Chet said.

Chet was a turkey calling champion and the designer of the frames used to make diaphragm mouth calls. As I listened to Chuck and Chet relive the last hour, with Chuck playing back the tape, it hit me how special the moment was. There weren't many factory made calls then, let alone diaphragm calls. Most were box, slate or wingbone.

Chet turned to me and said, "I heard you call to that big gobbler, too, and while to our ears it wasn't great, you gave him what he wanted. Remember that." We stood on that dirt road and talked until we had to leave for church. Afterwards, Chuck said he wanted to see Wayne Wiebley. We drove down Wiebley's driveway and a gray-haired man in his mid-50s emerged from a shed. "Up for the weekend scouting for gobblers, boys?" he asked with a chuckle. Chuck produced the tape recorder and Wayne was caught off guard by the turkey talk. As he listened to the tape, he nodded his approval mixed with laughter. When side one was finished he said, "That's some pretty good calling there, Chuck."



Chuck flipped to the other side, and as Wayne listened, his facial expression changed, and he asked to hear certain parts again. When the tape finished he asked, "Was that you, Denny? That was good raspy calling, and you gave him what he wanted." Wayne turned to Chuck and asked what shotgun he would be using. Chuck said a new

Remington 870 3-inch 12-gauge full choke with Winchester Double X Magnum number 2s (size 2 shot was legal back then). Wayne replied, "Big guns can't replace woodsmanship."

He then asked what I would be using. "A Savage over/under 20-gauge with 3-inch magnum 1 3/8-ounce loads stuffed with 6s. Wayne said he liked 7½ shot, because it gave a dense pattern out to 20 yards, and he never needed a second shot from his 16-gauge. Then he said something I've never forgotten.

"Have some patience with the longbeards, boys, and don't move unless their heads are behind something. Work the birds, use your woods savvy, get 'em close, and when they give you the eye, don't look into their eyes." Wayne asked me if the big tom had given me the eye when he putted and disappeared. "How did you know?" I asked. He nodded and asked where the bird was hanging around. Not knowing the exact location, Chuck filled in the gaps. Later that year Chuck told me that Wayne, without any camo, had killed that longbeard at 16 yards.

I missed the opener of the '75 season, but headed for Tioga County to hunt during the first week. When I arrived late Sunday afternoon, Chuck and Mike Bishop excitedly related the previous day's events. Friday evening they had located a tom going to roost and were set up there at first light the next morning. Mike sat up against a big red oak with Chuck behind him doing the calling. After sitting and listening for 20 minutes, Chuck yelped and seven different toms cut loose. Just as a jake was coming in, a mature gobbler popped into view on Mike's left. The younger birds scattered, and after 30 minutes the tom gobbled and strutted to within 25 yards. When the bird strutted behind a tree, Mike's 16-gauge came up, and when it popped into view, he shot. Mike's trophy sported an 11-inch beard and 1 3/8-inch spurs. "We can't wait for tomorrow," they said.

Up at 3 a.m., we ate, dressed and went out on the porch, only to discover that it was 37 degrees and a light rain — that soon turned to snow — was falling. I went back inside and grabbed a wool sweater. We drove down the road in Chuck's pickup with the heater going full blast. We all knew we were going to get wet that day, but we stuck it out until noon without hearing a gobble. We stayed another day, but so did the lousy weather, so Tuesday afternoon we left for Perry County. When we got to Chuck's cabin the sun was shining, the temperature was in the low 60s and the sky was a deep blue.

On Wednesday morning we traveled down Black Log Valley Road to a spot where we knew a gobbler had been hanging out. While Mike stayed in the truck, Chuck and I made a wide loop and got above where the gobbler liked to roost. The thick mountain laurel and rhododendron made it tough to get a shot at an incoming bird, but we sat close to each other, with a big oak at our backs, and waited anyway. Finally, Chuck called and the tom gobbled behind us. Turned out, after an hour and a half we never did see that bird.

Later that afternoon, when we passed where we had been parked earlier on Black Log Valley Road, there in the middle of the road was a gobbler with an 11-inch beard. Chuck stopped the truck in front of the bird and it flew back toward Shade Mountain. Later we stopped at Wayne's house and told him about the morning's events.



"You should have waited until quitting time. Where were you going in such a hurry? He'd a come in eventually. Remember boys, have some patience with the longbeards," he reminded us.

The next spring, Chuck and I headed for Clinton County, to Paul Hartman's place near Mill Hall. Reuniting three old high school buddies was exciting, and getting together took some doing. Paul had wanted to try turkey hunting, but could never find time away from his job.

At 5 a.m. on the opener Chuck owl hooted and a gobbler sounded off up a steep mountain on SGL 255. We climbed quickly and quietly to a spot above the bird. Chuck had spent the greater part of Friday coaching Paul in the ways of spring turkey hunting. Paul was now sitting with his back against a tree on the edge of a bench. I was to his right and back 25 yards, while Chuck sat 25 yards directly behind Paul. When the gobbler let loose Chuck and I could tell he was still on the roost. But when Chuck yelped the turkey was on the ground in a heartbeat. Using every calling trick in the book, Chuck seductively called that boss gobbler to within 10 feet of Paul. When I heard Chuck yell, "shoot," I knew something was wrong, and the sound of wings whooshing down the mountain confirmed it. Paul's shotgun never got off his lap. Mesmerized by the magnificent gobbler strutting right in front of him, Paul never even thought about shooting. And when he finally did, it was too late.

After I moved to Luzerne County, in 1978, chasing turkeys became only an occasional springtime pursuit. In 1984, though, I called in a big tom in Sullivan County and killed him at 18 yards with

my Ithaca SKB 12-gauge, with the improved cylinder barrel and a 7/8-ounce load of 7½s.

In 1995 my close friend and snowshoe hare hunting buddy Rich Rodney convinced me to go gobbler hunting with him. Our first morning out we sat together, up against a big red maple, where we tag teamed a gobbler to come within 15 yards of us. But when Richie told me to shoot at the same time I told him to take the shot, we both started laughing so hard the tom ran away totally unscathed. Unlike the mid-1970s, when only a few flocks were around, turkeys were almost as commonplace as pheasants had been in my boyhood Montgomery County.

One evening on the second week of the season I went out to listen for roosting gobblers. Not far from my house two gobblers were sounding off from a 90-foot white pine. They gobbled to nearly 9 p.m. I called Ritchie to tell him about the gobbler with a deep resonate gobble, with a younger sounding one with him.

Early the next morning I was set up near this tree, wondering if I could kill this bird the way Wayne Wiebley or Chet Lesh could. I was dressed in a black and green Woolrich jacket and blue jeans, my reversible orange/camo hat and my Bean boots. Keeping my diaphragm calls in the refrigerator allowed me to use calls that I had made with Chuck down in Perry County 20 years earlier. I had my Ithaca Featherlite 20-gauge loaded with 1 1/16-ounce loads of number 5s, a custom load I had for this very situation. I knew exactly how far the bird could be for the pattern to be near 100 percent.

After I set up about 90 yards above the bird it started to rain, then thunder and lightning. I yelped and two birds sounded off. The thunder kept them gobbling, so I waited. After an hour, the rain tapered off, and I didn't know if the birds were on the ground yet, so I waited some more. Fog was drifting in and I saw movement about 80 yards out. There were two birds, and the smaller one was clucking as it walked. I cackled. The big bird triple-gobbled and ran into a toppled red oak top and stopped. I could hear him strutting, and then he jumped up on that red oak top and walked toward me. When his head went behind an intervening spicebush, the old grouse gun found my shoulder. At 18 yards he deflated out of his strut and turned to give me the eye. As the shot from my 20-gauge echoed down the hollow, I could almost hear Chuck saying, "Get on that bird." As I headed over to the tom, I noticed his 12-inch beard. I tagged the bird and began carrying it to the truck, but as I got closer he seemed heavier and heavier. On the scale the gobbler weighed 25 pounds and had 15/16-inch spurs. I could still hear Wayne and Chet, a quarter of a century ago, saying, "Give 'em what they want, be patient with the longbeards and use your savvy. And, when he gives you the eye . . . " Thanks, guys. □

Cover Painting by Bob Sopchick

THE ANTICIPATION of that first gobble of the season is all the incentive needed for a diehard turkey hunter to have made the long hike up the mountain well before daylight, long before many "logical" people are even awake. And after it comes, while the old tom is still on the roost, the senses are heightened, and then he appears over a knob out of the pines where he had roosted not long after you heard him fly down. The gobbler appears black in the dim woods, but as the light increases you see him in his iridescent glory. Oh, the joys of spring gobbler hunting.

PA Youngsters Take Aim

By Adam Heggenstaller
NRA Senior Communications Specialist

WITH MORE THAN one million hunters taking to the woods each year, Pennsylvania arguably has one of the strongest hunting traditions in the United States. The National Rifle Association's International Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) program is helping to preserve this heritage by encouraging youngsters to develop their hunting skills as safe, responsible sportsmen.

This year YHEC celebrates its 20th anniversary of testing young hunters' abilities in areas such as marksmanship and wildlife identification. The program has reached more than one million youngsters across the nation and Canada since its inception in 1985 and has been recognized as the most comprehensive youth hunting program in North America.



DEVON BABCOCK, 17, of Rome, squeezes off a shot during the muzzleloader portion of the 2004 international YHEC.

Pennsylvania is one of 31 states to participate in YHEC. The Game Commission's Scotia Range near State College hosts an annual YHEC event, the next of which is scheduled for June 18, 2005. In addition to state and local events, YHEC includes an international competition, which draws upwards of 400 youngsters from the U.S. and Canada and runs the better part of a week.

This year, the international event will be held at the NRA Whittington Center in Raton, New Mexico, July 25-29. The location of the event generally alternates between Raton and Mansfield in Tioga County, where portions are conducted at the Mill Cove Environmental Area and Mansfield University.

At the international YHEC, young hunters compete in a series of eight events designed to enhance classroom knowledge and increase practical, in-the-field experience. Participants take aim at various targets during .22 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader and archery events; identify wildlife; embark on an orienteering course and complete a hunter safety trail and written hunter safety exam. Youngsters vie for two overall titles: top individual and top team, in two age classes — junior (ages 14 and under) and senior (ages 15-18).



The JUNIOR BLUE TEAM took a third-place finish in the junior team category. Clockwise, from top left: Zachary Knepp, Perkasie; Austin Adams, Herndon; Ian Copenhaver, Lewistown; Jared Lewis, Perkasie and Levi Castle, Troy.

Events are conducted under simulated hunting conditions to provide the best practical environment for testing and reinforcing young hunters' skills. For example, participants shoot hunting-style .22 rifles and muzzleloaders from several offhand positions at game-sized targets often partially concealed by brush at varying ranges. The shotgun portion of the challenge is a clays course where targets are presented at constantly changing distances, angles and speeds. During the archery event, young hunters must accurately judge distance and trajectory in order to place arrows in the top-scoring area of life-size 3-D animal targets.

These separate challenges combine to test proficiency, but above all, stress safety and responsibility in the field. In fact, the international YHEC is open only to those who have graduated from a hunter safety course — like the Game Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education program.

"As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of YHEC, we take great pride in how the program has affected a generation of hunters," says Craig D. Sandler, NRA executive director of General Operations. "Through the efforts of parents, volunteers and hunter education instructors, more than a million youngsters have become safer, more responsible hunters, and they have become ideal representatives of the sport as well. The impact of YHEC on hunting will be seen for years to come."

Last year, from July 26-30, young hunters braved driving downpours at the Mill Cove Environmental Area to compete in the international event. Although more than three inches of rain fell, Pennsylvania youngsters remained on target, claiming first-place honors in both the senior individual and team categories. Traditionally, Pennsylvania youth have fared well at the international competition.

For the second time in two years, Devon Babcock of Rome attained the top senior individual title. Babcock is no stranger to YHEC honors, as this marked the fourth time he walked away with an individual win at the international level.

"There isn't really a secret to doing well at YHEC," said Babcock of his impressive string of victories. "It's all about practice, and I do that every chance I get. Practicing has definitely improved my shooting skills, and it has taught me how to be safe with firearms."

Joining Babcock in notching a win for the Keystone State were members of the Pennsylvania Senior Blue Team, their combined score lead the senior team category. The team included: Lynsey Arnold of Ulster; James Bradley, Mars; Garrett Desmond, Mill Hall; Chad Setzler, McVeytown; Dustin Troutman, Herndon and coach Doug



THE SENIOR BLUE TEAM notched a victory in the senior team category. The team consisted of (back row, from left) Coach Doug Desmond, Mill Hall; Lynsey Arnold, Ulster; James Bradley, Mars; (front row, from left) Chad Setzler, McVeytown; Garrett Desmond, Mill Hall; and Dustin Troutman, Herndon.

Desmond, Mill Hall.

"It was exciting to be around so many other hunters my age," said Arnold, a six-year YHEC veteran. "You learn a lot by participating in YHEC just by watching other competitors and talking to them about the different events. Everyone wants to do well at YHEC, but everyone is there to have a good time too."

The Pennsylvania Junior Blue Team finished third in the junior team category. Team members included: Austin Adams of Herndon; Levi Castle, Troy; Ian Copenhaver, Lewistown; Zachary Knepp, Perkasie; Jared Lewis, Perkasie and coach Doug Knepp, Perkasie.

In all, 55 youngsters represented the commonwealth at the international event. Before competing on this level, they were among nearly 200 young hunters who participated in the state YHEC earlier in the summer. Participation in a state or local YHEC is an eligibility requirement for the international event.

The Pennsylvania YHEC Council is a dedicated group of volunteers responsible for organizing the state event. The council provides funding for YHEC with help through The NRA Foundation; they design the competition and supply the manpower needed to conduct the all-day event. The council also pays to send "top guns" on to the international event.

"YHEC is the only program of its kind in the world; it tests both hunting knowledge and skill," says Charlie Fox, Pennsylvania YHEC Council chairman. "Youngsters love the shooting part of the competition, but they also need to be able to name wildlife from tracks and sign and demonstrate that they know how to be safe in the field. Even if they don't win at the competition, they still gain something from the experience."

For more information on YHEC, call the NRA Hunter Services Department at (703) 267-1500 or visit **www.nrahq.org/hunting/youthed.asp.**

To find out more about the Pennsylvania YHEC, contact the PGC's Information and Education Department at (717) 787-6286 or check out the Pennsylvania YHEC Council at **http://clubs.bowhunting.net/PAYHEC.** □



TRAVIS FORREST, 12, Ulster, takes a compass reading before setting off on the orienteering course.

You can actually teach an old dog a new trick, especially during . . .

Spring Turkey Season

By Roger L. Furlong

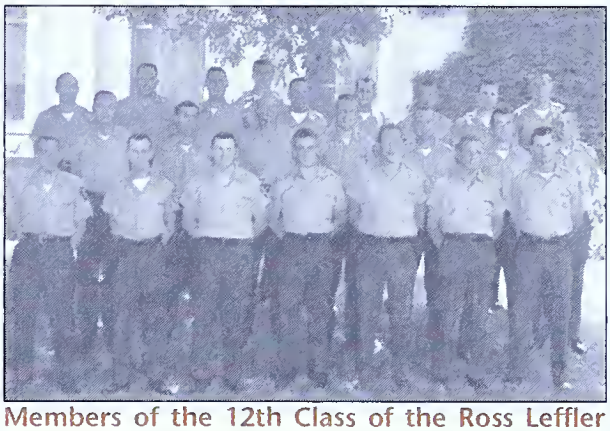
MY FATHER, Jack R. Furlong, is a retired WCO. He has been devoted to the Game Commission for more than three decades, and worked his entire career in Clearfield County, where I was born and raised. This short story is my chance to explain something I should have said years ago at his retirement party. I was asked then if I had any words to say, and I declined, not being prepared, and because I was never much for being a public speaker. I regret that I didn't speak out that day.

Let me share a hunting story, though, on how an "old dog" learned a new trick. Last spring Dad and I were hunting in southern New York. He had already taken three gobblers, two in West Virginia and one in Pennsylvania. We began our hunt before daylight in an area just north of my home in Tioga County. We were hunting on property just across the Pennsylvania border. We have hunted together many times, but this particular trip was special.



We marched through the darkness to a favorite spot of mine. Dad is in his early 70s now, and his internal transmission is stuck in low. "Slow, but steady," he has muttered many times, or, "I'll get there when I get there." Anyway, we made our way to a stand of hardwoods and hemlocks just below a large open field, where turkeys frequently roost. We finally arrived and settled in, waiting for daylight. To make a long story short, two different groups of birds with mature gobblers came through with no shots fired. We goofed both times. No need to mention the details, only that our luck wasn't that good, so we moved about 100 yards and settled in for another try.

Not long after, a hen, followed by a mature tom and jake, charged down the lower edge of the field just above us. When the hen entered the woods she took flight for some reason, but the two gobblers just continued walking and disappeared into the woods. We called off and on and finally got a response from the birds, which were circling below us. Soon they appeared to our right, coming up the hill, pick-



Members of the 12th Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in June 1966. JACK FURLONG is on the far left in the second row.

ing insects as they approached. The gobblers didn't seem really interested as they fed in our direction, and then they slowly worked off to our right, walking directly away from us, 100 yards away. We tried everything to call them back, but they kept walking away, feeding as they went, and then it hit me. I remembered seeing a neat tactic on an NWTF video to get gobblers fired up, and thought I'd give it a try.

I began with aggressive, groaning purrs, and to my surprise, we got a response. We watched each gobbler do an about-face and start marching back in our direction. The jake was leading at a fast pace, his head glowing bright red. The mature tom was walking in a straight line for us, but at a slow pace. The jake cut the distance quickly, coming in to about 15 yards, but big boy stopped about 45 yards away and formed the typical "question mark" with his head and neck. By this time Dad had decided to shoot, knowing the tom was not likely to get much closer, especially if the jake spooked. Dad squeezed off a shot from his Model 1300 Winchester, knocking the gobbler flat. The bird weighed 20 pounds and had a long beard. It was the first time I called in a gobbler for my dad. What a thrill it was and it's a hunt I'll never forget. My father was quite impressed with the calling tactic I had learned, as he couldn't argue with the results.

My father is the king of short stories, writing many Field Notes in *Game News* over the years. He also remains devoted to protecting game and our natural environment. He was quite the investigator, too. He would normally question me about facts, and each question would have incredible attention to details. I learned very quickly that he already knew the answers and was only checking to see if I did. Integrity is a strong trait, and he demanded that we have it.

When I declined to speak at his retirement, I had made a big mistake. But then I realized something he taught me along the way — learn from mistakes. More importantly, learn from other's mistakes. Now, this is my chance to tell him thanks. He probably would say, "Thanks for what, Kid?"

Jack is now a grandfather. He has two beautiful granddaughters — Kali Marie, 9 and Molly Ann, 7. Both love their Papa Jack very much. I find myself questioning these girls like my father did me. They, too, thank Papa Jack.

My father's best friend is William McCahan, other wise known as "Skinner." Skinner rode shotgun on many of Dad's night shifts, and it would not be right to not mention this mountain of a man. When my brother and I started hunting, it was Skinner who took us when Dad had to work. Mr. McCahan is the type of guy that gains respect from everyone he meets.

I'm proud of what my father did and what he does now. I thank him for influencing me to do the right things in life. Let me sum it up in short order: High school, Marine Corps, college and my career. You influenced it all, Dad, and I thank you. □

The Hard Way

By Denise Raum

I NEVER DO anything the easy way. At least that's what many people tell me, and I have to agree. Take turkey hunting, for example. Without a doubt, I've had some amazing encounters. On one particular hunt I'll never forget. I could have literally hit the gobbler on the head with the muzzle of my shotgun. He came in so fast that I froze. And before I could gather my composure, he vanished in the thick brush behind me. It became rather routine for me to have a story to tell in camp after a day of turkey hunting; it was almost expected.

The 2003 season did not begin with my usual encounters, though. The turkeys were unusually quiet. Many others reported the same. My husband Mike and I spent much of that spring shaking our heads in disbelief, and the birds were really trying our patience. I was determined to harvest my first Eastern turkey, having had the birds elude me the previous two years. I had vowed not to repeat my disappointing pattern of close encounters that produced no results. I had taken my first Rio Grande turkey in Kansas two weeks prior to the Pennsylvania season, which only strengthened my desire to harvest an Eastern bird.

That rainy 2003 spring season had come down to the wire without a bird, however. The Friday before the last day found us hunting on familiar territory in central Pennsylvania. Scouting had turned up abundant turkey sign, and Mike and I made

Michael Raum



DENISE RAUM displaying her first Eastern turkey taken on May 23, 2003. (Note: Carrying a turkey over the shoulder out of the woods can be dangerous. This photo was set up in the author's yard after her hunt.)

the decision the night before that we would break our usual tradition of hunting together, as a team and, instead, split up.

As dawn drew near the following morning we were not set up as early as we had intended. Mike accompanied me to a tree near an area where we knew a mature gobbler had been roosting. We had spotted him strolling through that area of the woods during late afternoons. With a good luck kiss, Mike circled around to the west, where he would hunt. With it already starting to get light, I hurriedly placed my decoy, got back to my stand, put my headnet on and prepared my call. I had brought along a particular push-button call, one I like because of the softer sounds it produces. To hide the call I placed my camouflage ball cap over it on the ground. As I leaned against the tree, I took a deep breath and began to take in my surroundings. I relaxed and hoped for a successful day.

The roller coaster ride of emotions had come to a screeching halt. I knew the moment I lost sight of the tom that he was gone. He had a destination in mind, and my spot on the mountain wasn't in his path.

The morning was damp and dreary with a slight breeze. I nestled into the tree, listening and waiting, and ten minutes later I was startled by a thunderous gobble. My heart raced. I was a bundle of nerves, thrilled at the possibility of what might happen. Despite the frustrating season I might finally get my chance, I thought. Five minutes passed and the tom gobbled again. He gobbled one more time before I heard him fly off the roost. I heard him land on the leaves and knew he was within 80 yards. My position was satisfactory, but I was not confident I was exactly where I needed to be to intersect the tom. I reached for the call under the hat and gave it a gentle push. I wanted to let the gobbler know where I was, but not sound too anxious.

Just as I had figured, the bird came from a slight rise 60 yards away and in full strut. I slowly lifted my shotgun to my knee, all while watching the bird show off his elegance. Then I realized I had forgotten my mouth call. Now, with the push button call on the ground beside me, I was stuck. I couldn't grab it and risk spooking the gobbler. I sat helpless, watching the majestic bird strut back and forth at 60 yards. He eventually walked behind some thick brush and vanished. Frantically scanning the area, trying to catch a glimpse of him, I could feel my heart sink.

The roller coaster ride of emotions had come to a screeching halt. I knew the moment I lost sight of him that he was gone. He had a destination in mind, and my spot on the mountain wasn't in his path. I waited several minutes then gave a soft cluck. The lack of response was numbing. I waited a few more minutes before calling one last time. The woods remained silent. With a heavy heart, I took a deep breath and thought about my plan for the rest of

the morning. I had a good idea where the gobbler was headed. I still had a chance. I refused to give up. I contemplated the best route to get in front of the gobbler and set up again.

After working my way around to get in front of the bird, I set up again, and then waited. Several minutes passed and then I heard it, a cluck right behind me. I didn't have time to get nervous; there was no anticipation. The gobbler was simply there. As I slowly turned my head to peek around the tree, I spotted him standing 20 yards away. He was smaller than the boss gobbler I had seen earlier. He caught me off guard and I was facing the wrong way. I couldn't imagine how I could ever get into a shooting postion. The only chance I had was two small trees that were between the gobbler and me. Once his head was behind one of those trees I thought I could maneuver into position. I would have to be quick and quiet, though. The second the bird's head bobbed behind the tree I moved my gun.

I was still not ready, though; I needed more time. The stock of the gun was not on my cheek. The turkey would have to go behind one of the trees again. Incredibly, as if on cue, he turned around, and went back behind the tree again. I got into position, not believing that I had succeeded with the turkey just 20 yards away. I waited for the shot, and when the gobbler stepped into the clear I pulled the trigger.

After reaching the fallen bird I dropped to my knees and gave thanks for my great hunt. My first Eastern gobbler was not the long beard that we had patterned that year. I let fate guide my decision on harvesting the bird. He was a legal gobbler, and I had determined beforehand that if a legal bird gave me a good shot I would take it. Everything came together that morning for me, and I'm convinced that everything happens for a reason. That gobbler certainly did not come easy. I accomplished a goal that I had been focusing on for quite some time. I guess you could say that I reached my aspiration the hard way, but then again, with turkey hunting, not many would say it's ever easy. □

Turkey Hunting Safety Tips

Positively identify your target before pulling the trigger.
Make your position known to other hunters.
Never stalk a turkey or turkey sound.
Assume every noise and movement is another hunter.
While calling, select a natural barrier to protect your back.
Shout "Stop" to alert approaching hunters.
Eliminate red, white, blue and black from your clothing.
Preselect a zone of fire.
Never carry decoys through the woods in your hands; use a vest or bag.
Fluorescent orange: While moving, hunters are required to wear at least 100 square inches on the head, visible 360 degrees. And although the safety color is not required at stationary calling locations, it's strongly recommended.

The Ultimate Adventure

By Connie Mertz

PERHAPS, it really was Divine intervention that 12-year-old Lauren Drobny's name was drawn to be taken on the first youth spring turkey hunt in 2004. Daymon Davis, 7-time world champion game caller from Montour County, not only gave a presentation on turkey hunting at a wild game banquet at his local church, but also volunteered to take one lucky youth on a hunt.

Lauren was delighted to be the chosen one. This would be her first true hunting adventure. "I just love the woods," she said emphatically. "I've had a bow in my hands since I was four years old, and it's like I've been preparing all my life for the time I could hunt."

Some of her girlfriends question her desire to be out in the woods. "They ask me, 'Isn't it boring?' I just say, 'what's boring is sitting inside and playing computer games all day!'"

Typical of a 12-year-old, she asked if her best girlfriend, also a new hunter, could go along. So began the preparation for both Lauren and her friend, Elizabeth Potter.

While Elizabeth attended the Col-Mont Gobblers turkey seminar for young hunters, Lauren's father was her mentor. He taught her how to use her own box call. She watched turkey hunting videos and practiced frequently with her Remington 870 20-gauge with fiber optic sights. The girls and Davis met often and discussed the particulars of the upcoming turkey hunt, including safety and ethics.

Elizabeth's father had purchased a Hoyt youth bow and tree stand for her birthday, prior to the fall 2003 archery season. "I knew I wanted to hunt since I was in first grade." She'd enjoyed her first hunting season. "It was really neat to hunt with my dad. We talked about a lot of things," she said proudly.

Unfortunately, she didn't get an opportunity to use her bow that year, but when rifle season arrived, her luck changed. She scored with her .223, taking a nice five-pointer from her treestand.

The eve of the girls' first turkey hunt finally arrived. They would be hunting on the Drobny farm in Columbia County. The two eager hunters could hardly restrain their excitement. Davis took the girls out on a trial run of the hunt, giving them safety instructions and going through the routine of setting up.

"I did the fly-down cackle, and did we hear gobblers!" Davis said, thoroughly convinced the girls would see gobblers in the morning.

"I was just so excited when I went to bed. There is just no way to describe how I felt," admitted Elizabeth. "I had dreams of turkeys and more turkeys all night, and I just couldn't sleep."

Lauren wasn't much better; she tossed and turned all night as well.

It didn't take an alarm clock to get the girls out of bed at 4 a.m., and their excitement only grew as they and Davis walked into the pre-dawn woods. The area chosen was a hardwood flat that dropped into a hollow of hardwoods and hemlocks. While

the girls set up, Davis went a few yards away and then used an owl hooter call.

"Oh my gosh," recalled Elizabeth. "There were gobblers everywhere."

As the action intensified, Davis slipped closer to the girls to instruct them. A few moments later, two gobblers sounded off, only about 35 yards away.

"My heart was in my throat," Elizabeth remembers.

"I couldn't believe this was actually happening," Lauren added.

When the two gobblers got within 10 yards, Davis had some fun. He made a soft call that sent the excited gobblers to gobbling right in front of the girls.

"Oh my, was that incredible," Elizabeth exclaimed.

The gobblers were in front of Lauren, who said the pressure was really mounting. With the birds strutting side-by-side in front of her, all she could do was wait for a safe shot. As she waited, the birds suddenly disappeared.

"Do you see them?" Davis whispered.

In a shaky, nervous and weak voice, Elizabeth said, "y-y-yeah."

With that she turned slowly and put the bead on the middle of one bird's neck and pulled the trigger. "Did I get him?



This year's Youth Turkey Hunt is Saturday April 23, statewide, for bearded birds. All properly licensed and accompanied junior hunters are eligible.

Did I get him?" she repeated.

"Nah," said Davis, joking. "You missed."

What elation Elizabeth felt when she saw her trophy. Her one perfectly placed shot dropped the jake on the spot. "I wanted the other one," she said, "but I couldn't get on him." Her turkey sported a double beard and weighed 16 pounds.

As they enjoyed the moment, three more gobblers sounded off. Lauren quickly set up, and the birds were soon within range, but the brush was too thick for a shot.

And so ended the girls' first turkey hunt. Would they go again?

"I would go no matter what," Lauren stated. "I would have to be very sick not to go." Lauren didn't know how true her words would be.

Davis agreed to take her out for the opening day of the regular spring gobbler season, but as it turned out, sickness kept her from hunting.

She felt no disappointment however, "I just enjoy the woods, and it was such a thrilling experience. I want my friends to know that hunting is fun."

As the thrill of the hunt lives on in the lives of Elizabeth Potter and Lauren Drobny, Davis proudly admitted, "The experience was probably more enjoyable for me than the girls. We really need to pass our hunting heritage on to the youth. I haven't found anything better than taking a youngster hunting." □

LAUREN DROBNY, Bloomsburg, far left, and ELIZABETH POTTER, Danville, enjoyed a thrilling gobbler hunt. Elizabeth was the lucky one.

A dedicated group of biologists and pilots work to help ducks and duck hunters alike.

Duck Chasers

By Lori D. Richardson
PGC Education Specialist

IT'S 9A.M., I pop two *Bonine* tablets chased by a quick swig of water and grab the car keys. In an hour I'll be climbing into a very small plane for several hours of unpredictable flight conditions and I'm not taking any chance of loosing my stomach in front of my colleagues especially on my first assignment.

It is a gray day with very low clouds and we'll need at least 1500 feet of visibility to make the run. While we're waiting for the latest weather report and the "all clear" to go, John Dunn and Ian Gregg, two PGC biologists, pull on coveralls and check their helmets.

"Do you wear those so you can talk to each other over the buzz of the propeller?" I ask, pointing to Dunn's helmet.

"Actually," he says, "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requires us to wear helmets, along with these flame resistant overalls, because low-level flying has proven to be particularly hazardous to the lives of biologists." After a short pause he adds, "We don't have any for you." Thinking back, maybe that should have made me nervous, perhaps it was the *Bonine*.

I squeeze into my assigned seat in the Cessna 182, more compact than I'd imagined. There are seats for four of us, but barely: the pilot, two biologists and me. My camera bag fits too snugly in the space above my feet, behind the front passenger seat and against my shins. In the seat next to me, Gregg is setting up a laptop with several gadgets, and doesn't seem hindered by the cramped quarters. I've been given a headset and shown where to plug it in so I can hear the voices of the biologists and pilot over the (only one mind you) propeller.

Seatbelt buckled, headset on and camera ready I get a glace of Governor Rendell boarding a larger plane bound for DC. I notice, interestingly enough, that he doesn't seem to be wearing fire resistant coveralls.

"Skylane 82 Papa Alpha, you are cleared for takeoff," crackles over the headset.

We leave the Capital City Airport just south of Harrisburg and head up river. For the work we'll be doing today, our optimal height is 500 feet above ground (or in our case water). This requires the pilot to acquire exemptions from both the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Aviation Administration. We'll fly as close to 500 feet as



AN AERIAL VIEW of waterfowl on one of the management ponds at Haldeman's Island.



PGC Biologists IAN GREGG and JOHN DUNN along with pilot JIM BURTON.

we can for the duration of the flight with the exception of power lines, mountains and the like.

We're flying so low because the biologists are searching for and counting waterfowl below us. This is the third and final leg of this survey, until next year, when they'll do it all again.

The first leg took them down the Susquehanna, from Harrisburg to the state-line, around Philadelphia, up to Reading and back. On the second leg, they flew to lake Erie and the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area. Today's trip will be the north leg of the Susquehanna. At one time there was a fourth leg, around Pittsburgh: it was done for a period of years after the 1988 oil spill but hasn't been done lately.

These aerial surveys have been taking place since 1955 and are part of a nation-wide effort to survey waterfowl in areas where they concentrate. Biologists have been flying essentially the same routes since that time. Every January, surveys are coordinated in each flyway as a general inventory of waterfowl species and populations and as an assessment of waterfowl habitat and distribution on wintering grounds. The data is then compiled in a national database administered by the USFWS.

2005 marks the 50th anniversary of the North American Waterfowl Survey of which these mid-winter data sets are a part. The USFWS says the program is the world's most wide-ranging, comprehensive long-term survey of wildlife and that it "represents a 50-year legacy of standardized cooperative surveys performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, state and provincial biologists, and non-governmental co-operators."

Gregg has his laptop hooked up to a Magellan GPS unit that is tracking

In Pennsylvania, the trends in tundra swan, Canada goose and snow goose numbers have been rising. Duck populations have been fairly stable with the exception of black ducks, which have been on a gradual decline. These trends are consistent with those of the Atlantic flyway as a whole.

A total of 80,380 waterfowl were observed state-wide including: 5,243 dabbling ducks, 2,499 diving ducks, 3,993 mergansers, 67,748 geese and 810 swans.

our flight path. He's using Moving Map Voice Recording software, and has a small microphone connected to the system. When one of the biologists sees waterfowl below, Gregg gives the mouse a click and speaks into the mic, "Three hundred Canada geese, 80 mergansers, black ducks - four."

Dunn, equipped with binoculars, says, "another hundred Canada geese, 40 mallards," and Gregg relays the information.

Each time he speaks into the mic, the system notes the date, time and GPS coordinates for the species and number of birds recorded. Very cool, I think to myself and wonder what they did back in 1955. Dunn tells me the USFWS is now experimenting with video cameras hooked up to GPS recording systems and mounted to the bottom of the planes they use. Later, the video can be played back through software that will count the birds.

On the laptop screen is a growing red line indicating our path of flight. As we move further on, the line left behind us turns purple. When Gregg notes birds seen, the black outline of a circle appears on the line at the location the fowl were spotted. Though the trail we create isn't overlaid on a map, I can see how it follows the Susquehanna north, taking a detour partway up the Juniata (to Rte 17), doing several loops around the waterfowl management ponds at Haldeman's Island, then continuing on up river.

At Haldeman's we pass a group of gulls (or "sky rats" as the pilot calls them) at eye level. Near Millersburg we see a pair of bald eagles in a tree on the east side of the river. We first come across snow on the ground around Sunbury, and first spot ice on ponds somewhere around the Watsontown Brick Company building, whose large sign happens to be quite legible from 500 feet.

All states in the Atlantic flyway (those from the Great Lakes east to the coast from Maine to Florida) do counts during the same time frame. Most are aerial surveys, unless for some reason (like weather), flights are not possible, in which case surveys are conducted from the ground.

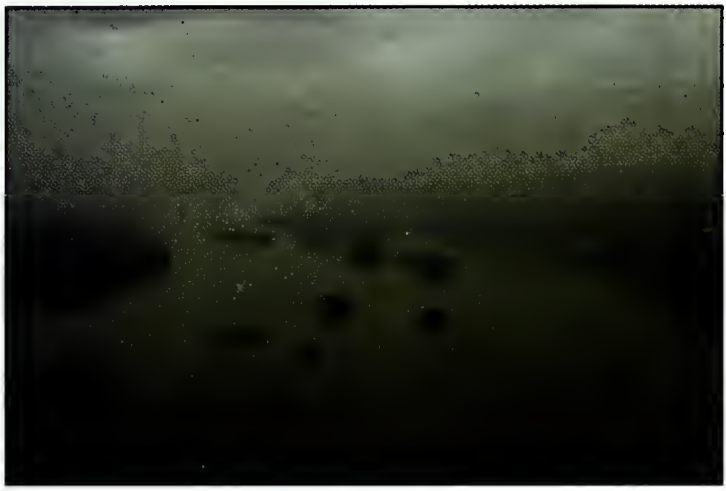
While they admit that they'll have to check the data, Gregg and Dunn seem to think that waterfowl numbers are a bit low for this leg of the survey. They believe both mild weather and high water have played a role in the reduced number of birds seen along this route.

When it's cold and ponds and lakes freeze over, birds tend to congregate in areas of open water. Since the river is moving, it tends to stay open longer and birds concentrate there. With the mild winter we've been having, we've seen very little ice during our flight that would compel birds to gather along the river.

Waterfowl also tend to



GEESE congregate near the open water of this pond near the PP&L power plant.



LOOKING SOUTH down the Susquehanna near the mouth of the Juniata.

hang out near the edge of the river. When the water is high, the ducks are often out of sight, under trees and brush that aren't flooded at normal water levels, so birds may not get counted even though they're there because they can't be seen from the plane. Though weather can affect the counts of individual states, sometimes dramatically, flyway counts stay pretty constant.

Data from Pennsylvania and the rest of the Atlantic flyway, along with data from all the other flyways (Pacific, Central and Mississippi) are collated by the USFWS. Twice a year waterfowl biologists and government officials use the data at Flyway Council meetings to discuss the biology and management of these migratory birds. Here, they also set hunting regulations across the U.S. and Canada that both maintain healthy waterfowl populations and provide for the greatest amount of recreational opportunities.

Information gathered through this program helps biologists in many facets of their responsibility to this resource. These data make it possible to assess trends taking place over the long-term such as changes in winter concentrations of waterfowl and in habitat use, both within and among flyways. They help document critical associations between specific species and specific habitat and address fundamental questions about population dynamics. Data from these surveys can be critical to both state and federal agencies in matters of land acquisition, mitigation negotiation and environmental impact assessments. For some species, such as tundra swans and brant geese, these data are the only available information on the status of their populations.

When we reach the riverside town of Montgomery, we cut east to the PP&L plant at Washingtonville and do several fly bys of the nearby ponds to count birds there, before heading home.

Until this point, the trip has been rather quiet but we'd hit a warm front near Sunbury that began to toss us around a bit. Now my stomach feels better when I keep my eyes on the horizon as opposed to the ground, my notebook or the camera. Though I'm enjoying the view, I am relieved to hear the pilot's voice break through the whirr in my headset, "Requesting Harrisburg Approach, Skylane 82 Papa Alpha."

We fly over the Capital and enjoy a flawless landing. Then, as is customary with Dunn and Gregg, we celebrate the fact that we've survived, at a local diner. There we fill our cautiously empty, but now growling and restless, stomachs as we chat about ducks, geese and future adventures. □

A searchable database of mid-winter surveys is available through the Migratory Bird Data Center at http://birddata.fws.gov/databases/db_selection.html. Data are available for the Atlantic Flyway since 2001 and for the Mississippi Flyway since 2002. Data for other flyways are not yet available.

A beautiful white cap and a pair of blueberry cheeks rose from the shadows. The moment of truth was only yards away.

A Dance to Remember

By Tim Beaumont

AT AGE 29, much of my turkey hunting is yet to come, but that's not to say my past turkey hunts have been nothing much to write about. I have been fortunate enough to run into many teachers named "Tom," and to walk away with knowledge that might help others. However, I know I have a lot more to learn about Mr. Turkey. Isn't that why we get up before dawn, step out into the cold frosted air, and patiently wait for a bird to sound off? I guess the hard part is getting up. The easy part is listening.

To see his child become successful in any endeavor evokes a father's pride. If his son or daughter has learned from his teachings, that pride is great. The following is a story that represents a father's love of the outdoors, and to this day, is my most memorable of turkey hunts.

Early one May morning, my father woke me from a dream. "Time to get up," he said. The eggs and bacon breakfast was the first of the day's memorable events for this tired college boy. I wasn't used to eating anything other than cold pizza. Then again, I wasn't used to getting up so early, either.

During breakfast, we made plans to hunt some toms I had located the night before. They weren't hard to locate; I had found them in the same pine trees year after year. The pines are on public ground, and fortunately for me, most of the public was at work this morning. (College students might have an appetite for eggs and bacon, but most aren't hungry for work when they're home on summer vacation.) We would be alone on this hunt.

We walked as quietly as we could down the old reddog road. I walked like he had taught me to walk, not dragging my feet across the ground. Making out the potholes was hard to do in the darkness. Pine trees create a canopy that limits light, and this morning, things weren't any different. We didn't talk with much of a voice, only a whisper now and then, so as not to give away our position as we crept slowly towards our destination.

On the right side of the road was a large section of big hardwoods and saplings. An old oil well stood atop the hill and led way to a quiet entrance. My father walked up a trail and parked himself under the branches of a large, weathered oak tree, where he had a great view of the valley and would be within earshot of me.

The left side of the road was blanketed with pines. It was steeper than the hillside



Dwight Kirkland

my father had climbed. He hoped that the gobblers roosted in the pines would fly over to him. This would become part of his education — sometimes it pays to slip and slide your way to the top of an old slate dump.

It wasn't hard for me to decide where to begin my assent. I, too, had a path to use for a quiet approach. The problem with barren paths is the lack of footholds. I might as well have brought my sled. Footing was difficult, and eventually my clumsiness woke a boss hen.

A cluck directly above my head was all it took for me to realize that I was too close for comfort. As I slowly raised my eyes to look up, I caught the silhouette of a large hen. And I imagine that as she looked down she caught the silhouette of a disgruntled hunter. One thing was for sure, though; I had a problem. My father didn't teach me what to do in this situation, but these birds were about to give me a lesson.

To be honest, I had no idea what to do other than remain still. It was early enough for me to try to convince Mrs. Hen that I belonged in the woods. Frozen in the darkness, I decided to stay put. If she relaxed and thought that I belonged at the base of the tree, my calling would be left up to her. Obviously, her voice would be more polished than my own scratchings on a slab of slate.

Luck was on My Side

Luck was on my side. My new found love began whispering clucks and purrs of spring passion, and gobblers from all around serenaded her with a chorus of gobbles. I'll bet there were 10 different gobblers chiming in. It was awesome! Unfortunately, my gun was unloaded, I couldn't position myself, and once it got light, I would look out of place. I had to make a move and I had to do it soon.

After being subjected to about 20 prolific rounds of gobbling, I made the move that changed my luck. I stepped away from the base of the tree, jumped up and down while waving my hands



TIM BEAUMONT, now of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and his "Dancin' Tom" taken near his hometown of Oakdale in Allegheny County.

until Mrs. Hen got tired of my antics. Out of the tree she flew, filling the air with disheartening cackles. The other turkeys responded with thunderous gobbles, and I realized something as she glided out of the valley: The gobblers thought she'd just flown down and remained on my hillside. They hadn't seen her fly away; they'd only heard her.

At that very moment, I started busting my hump, slipping and sliding my way to the top of the hill. Once there, I took out my slate call and clucked one time. Every one of those big fellas responded as though I was Mrs. Hen. They were fooled, and I learned a major lesson in turkey hunting — dancing like mad may win over college girls, but female turkeys find it very unattractive.

I quickly ran to the closest tree, to break up my outline, and got ready. I spread an array of calls around me, quietly chambered a round of number 5s in my Mossberg 500, covered my face with a mask that would make G. I. Joe envious, and then began a sequence of soft yelps with my mouth call. Immediately, the gobblers responded and I focused on the closest of calls. Again I talked turkey, and a bird began closing the distance. Eventually, a beautiful white cap and a pair of blueberry cheeks arose from the shadows.

The moment of truth was only yards away. He was as beautiful as any mature monarch could be. On this morning he, too, was in the dancing mood. The boss paraded himself around, showing off a full display of tail feathers. Twenty or more gobbles penetrated the air as I awaited his next move. After fifteen minutes of the most uncomfortable pose I could ever hold, he stepped into my line of fire and dropped. Releasing the empty cartridge and clicking on the safety on, I approached the fallen bird.

After tagging my trophy, I picked him up, straightened out my shoulders and walked proudly along the ridge top toward my father. He, too, was please with my early morning success. Apparently, he'd heard the whole thing. We both admired the 1½-inch spurs and 10½-inch beard while I recapped the hunt. Smiles, a handshake and a walk to remember followed. I wear that smile every time I'm asked about the turkey that now graces my wall.

My father is not one to step forward and tell me that he loves me. Our love needs only conversation. A handshake congratulating one another on the successes of our outdoor achievements is good enough. With each passing season, my understanding of this unconditional love increases. But we don't need success to show appreciation for one another. Small rewards, such as recognizing the sounds of a cardinal because he taught me what to listen for, are compliments for a job well done. In the future, I hope to return the favor to a small audience of listeners. May all of you find the true meaning of the hunt, just as I did on that May morning. □

Mitigation on Canoe Camp Creek

By James A. McMullen, PennDOT

CANOE CAMP CREEK originates just north of Blossburg in Tioga County, meandering north along State Route 2027 and emptying into the Tioga River at the village of Canoe Camp.

In 2003 the Game Commission joined PennDOT, private property owners and other state agencies to stabilize and enhance this, slightly more than a mile long section of the creek as mitigation for the construction of Route 15 in Tioga County.

The goal of the project was to preserve existing, relaim deteriorating and prevent future degradation of the natural habitat in the area.

The first part of the project required the installation of a channel block to change the existing course of the creek and prevent damage to existing structures (barns) and Route 2027. The channel block is about 60 feet long and was constructed using large boulders.

The second part of the project was to protect the stream bank from erosion with geotextile material held in place by 36 inches of rock to help control the loss of valuable topsoil.

The third part, installing a fence to keep livestock away from the streambed, included cattle crossings and watering sources for livestock.

The final portion of the project was to seed disturbed soil areas with annual ryegrass. A seed mix of grasses, legumes and wildflowers such as black-eyed Susan, ox-eye daisy and New England aster was also used and black willow and red-osier dogwood sprigs were planted. □





THE GAME COMMISSION, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, along with other state agencies and private landowners combined forces to protect and enhance a streambank along Canoe Camp Creek, in Tioga County.



Wild Turkeys on the... Doorstep

By Kathy Korber
Photos by Hal Korber

MY FATHER and I share an appreciation for watching wildlife. Birds and squirrels at our birdfeeders and wildflowers, fox and grouse in the field dominate our long-distance telephone conversations. We often compare and sometimes compete over what I refer to as window wildlife — nature visible from the house. In addition to the bird feeder regulars, we each see robins and northern flickers combing our lawns, butterflies sunning themselves against a leafy backdrop, chipmunks fleeing to and from caches, and resident sharp-shinned hawks making their rounds.

In a recent conversation, I taunted, "I'm looking out of our window and counting turkeys as I enjoy my lunch. I've counted 76 in the flock today, although I may have missed a few."

My father responded, "It just so happens that I am sitting in the rocker, reading the paper and watching 38 turkeys."

Competition aside, we were each enjoying a similar moment watching wildlife from our windows. The difference —my window looks out on rural Perry County. Our house sits among the old farms of Hominy Ridge where fields roll into steep ravines and wooded hollows, concealing springs that bubble and run into streams then wind their way to the pristine Juniata River. From our window the sun sets each evening over Tuscarora Mountain, one of the Appalachian Mountains' finest.

One might expect my father's window to have a similar view. Quite the contrary is true. His house is less than eight miles from downtown Pittsburgh. From an upstairs window, he can see high-rise apartments across the Allegheny River and from a nearby hilltop the Cathedral of Learning in Oakland. Houses sit close together in his suburban neighborhood; close enough to speak to your next-door neighbor, door to door, without raising your voice. Pittsburgh is a spectacular city, but hardly the

habitat for wild turkeys. Or, is it?

I spent the first half of my life in my parent's home. Although there were significantly fewer houses on the lane, wild turkeys were not part of the neighborhood or surrounding woodlot at the time (1970s and 80s). They were a secretive game bird of the countryside, northern mountains and big woods. It was an unusual occasion to spot a wild turkey and only on our weekend drives through the countryside north of Pittsburgh, or camping trips to Potter County. So, how did the wild turkey come to inhabit suburbia?

Pennsylvania's wild turkey populations were still recovering from near extirpation during my childhood. But, the turn of the 20th century marked their darkest days. The wild turkey's decline didn't occur overnight, however. It actually began in the early 1800s, as more settlers moved west, deeper into Pennsylvania. The Lands Act of 1792 motivated settlers and squatters alike to venture west looking for a fresh start. It was a promise of land ownership, an alluring promise for emigrants with few prospects and a willingness to work the land. It also attracted speculators to "improve," or rather, exploit the wilderness. About this time, fears of Native American hostilities in the east were fading and the frontier was not quite as foreboding as it was during the discord of the previous decades. People spread west across Pennsylvania, changing the habitat along the way. Settlements sprouted and forests were cleared for agriculture and timber.

Pittsburgh is a spectacular city, but hardly the habitat for wild turkeys. Or is it?

By the mid-1800s the only land unsettled was that too rough to clear for farming, areas with limited access to transportation routes and land with poor soil. The remaining rough and unspoiled pockets of Penn's Woods eventually fell to the timber boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s. By 1920 the forests were depleted. Pennsylvania was badly scarred and ecologically distressed.

Wild turkeys require open woodlands with natural or manmade clearings. Deforestation, to the extent that it had occurred, proved detrimental.

As human activity increased across the state, turkey numbers decreased. The wild turkey was an important staple for early Pennsylvanians. Settlers preyed on turkeys for sustenance and many for profit because of improving transportation, which expanded available markets. For a market hunter the resource was free, unregulated and widely available.

A century of ongoing habitat loss combined with relentless harvesting almost wiped out the commonwealth's wild turkey. In 1900, a meager 5,000 wild turkeys were estimated to populate all 46,043 square miles of the state. Turkeys in most eastern states faced the same decline. It is believed that fewer than 30,000 wild turkeys existed nationally.

Under current game laws the wild turkey presents an exciting challenge. One that requires skill and persistence and often leaves a hunter empty handed. Before game laws, however, a little knowledge of an area and the habits of a flock could bag a bird or a whole flock systematically.

Turkeys have certain natural habits that, under past "anything goes" measures, made them easy prey. For example, turkeys roost in tall trees each evening at or about sunset. An entire flock may use one tree or stand of trees. During cold or inclement weather they choose pines or hemlocks, but on fair nights, often an oak or other deciduous tree. As the leaves thin in autumn and before the canopy closes in spring, their silhouettes





WHETHER parading the street, scratching at birdfeeders or foraging on a car's grill, urban turkeys are frequent visitors to these suburbs, less than eight miles from downtown Pittsburgh.

against the dusk sky or starlit night make large targets. Males often call as they go to roost or as they leave at dawn unwittingly giving away the roost site. They will also respond to a crow's call, simulated turkey call or other loud noise, giving away their location. Turkeys are even more vulnerable in spring as males become preoccupied with mating.

Turkeys live in flocks. Size and sex ratio of a flock change with the seasons, but the instinct to flock together is strong, especially in autumn. When you break up a flock the birds will call to regroup. They will continue calling until reunited. These predictable natural behaviors gave the market hunter an unfair advantage.

In 1895, the Game Commission was created and immediately established and enforced regulations. Creating seasons (which included closing seasons when necessary), bag limits and harvest laws were the first steps to saving the wild turkey.

It would take nearly a century for the wild turkey to fully recover. Habitat improvement and regulated hunting were paramount to their recovery. Slowly, forests began to heal. And, although the native forest could never be restored, the need for conservation was at least recognized.

Throughout the 1900s the Game Commission improved habitat statewide and experimented with efforts of restoring the wild turkey. Among them were propagation farms. This was expensive and overall unsuccessful. In all, 200,000 game-farm turkeys were released.

The most effective method of restoring wild populations turned out to be trap and transfer programs in which turkeys are trapped using rocket nets and transfered from areas of abundant populations to areas of suitable habitat where turkey densities are low or absent altogether.

In 1937, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act was passed. This law put an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition. The revenue generated from the bill was apportioned to states for wildlife restoration. These funds made habitat improvement possible on a much larger scale. It also funded projects such as land acquisitions, wildlife reintroductions, research, surveys and inventories. The act played a major role in bringing back the wild turkey along with other wildlife species.

Turkeys also benefited in 1973 as

the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded. This nonprofit organization and its cooperators have spent 186 million dollars on projects to help wildlife agencies improve habitat and relocate turkeys.

Should my father and I compete in observing unique behavior of wildlife, particularly wild turkeys, he undoubtedly wins. The wild turkeys are uninvited guests at my father's hopper-style bird feeder, which stands atop a six-foot pole. One turkey typically stands on the feeder scratching the seed filled ledge until a large quantity of black oil sunflower seeds have fallen to the flock below. They pick up and swallow the seeds whole. No hulling is necessary because of their powerful gizzard, which is capable of crushing even whole acorns and walnuts.

It is not his intention to feed birds of this size. He stops filling that feeder when the turkeys are around so as not to encourage them. But even with an empty feeder, they return often to scavenge the yard for insects, seeds and tender greens.

The turkeys roam through the neighborhood foraging between houses and crossing the blacktop without hesitation. They keep a slightly cautious distance from children at play or neighbors washing their cars. But they are confident enough to confront a large house cat that often roams free. A male turkey once chased the feline when it stalked too close, putting it in its place.

One spring morning recently, my mother had to break up three large toms from strutting and sparring. They were carrying out these springtime rituals in the driveway and she was late for work.

My father watches the flock of turkeys forage as often as time allows. For the most part they behave as the flocks he has seen on hunting trips to Fulton and Potter counties. They slowly move through the neighborhood scratching and pecking at the ground. But he has observed a unique feeding behavior on the street one summer morning. Three turkeys stood at the front of a parked car pecking at its grill. He soon realized that the birds were extracting and eating dead insects.

On another occasion in spring, five gobblers became fixated with the neighbor's car, or at least the red racing stripe on the black Monte Carlo. The birds pecked diligently for 45 minutes at the brightly colored strip.

Remarkably Adaptable

At one time the presence of humans meant the decline of turkeys. Now, turkeys have proven how remarkably adaptable they can be. They currently occur in every county and population estimates speculate that over 340,000 wild turkeys now inhabit the state. They dwell in the countryside and the big woods as well as the fragmented neighborhood woodlots of urban and suburban areas.

The conservation lesson: Provide a livable habitat, regulate hunting and wild turkeys will thrive right up to the city limits. □



THIS URBAN TOM chose a work truck as the backdrop for struttin' his stuff.

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by

Bob Sopchick

Fresh Tracks

WELL AFTER MIDNIGHT, a doe and her grown fawn emerge from a small patch of woods and browse on the succulent new growth at the edge of the suburban mall. The rows of lights illuminating the parking lot cast an enormous dome of light that obscures the stars. The doe tests the unimpeded breeze that swirls across the macadam, and her fawn imitates her. Almost every night they made a circuit by following a tendril of brush from a woods to the north, feeding and resting at the patch of woods near the mall, then returning before first light.

One evening the deer left the cover of the woods as usual, but hesitated when the brushy strip they followed was gone. They continued on, by habit, across the freshly graded ground toward the distant lights, but turned back when they encountered a bulldozer and other equipment. The patch of woods near the mall would be cleared in a few days. The only evidence of their presence that remained in that bit of wild ground were some tracks they left in the black soil.



MAX DROPPED his wife off at the mall entrance and parked in the upper west corner of the lot, far away from the sea of cars, figuring he would read the evening paper and work a crossword puzzle while she shopped. Max rolled the windows down and let the warm April breeze blow through.

He had forgotten his reading glasses and briefly scanned the headlines. Max looked out the passenger window into the patch of woods where a cardinal sang, and whistled a fair imitation of its song. The cardinal came flitting out along the edge, crest up, looking for a rival. Max watched the bird, and then beyond made out the silhouette of the decrepit farmhouse in the dense thicket, backlit by the cantaloupe-colored evening sky. It was a profile that came rushing back through time, as familiar to him as the face of his wife. He thought the suburban sprawl had claimed the house when they built the mall, but there it stood.

With nothing better to do and time to kill, he walked into the woodlot along a trickling seep, as he had countless times as a boy, to this place, the home of Bill, his cousin and best friend. He stopped at the base of a towering sycamore, more than 100 feet high, centuries old. He placed both hands on the tree and looked up through its mottled limbs that caught and held the blush of evening light. "Old friend," he said, patting the tree. He and his cousin had spent many summer afternoons lazing in the branches, and from as high up as they dared to climb would watch the traffic on the dirt road that bisected this farming community.

Max stood in the shadow of the farmhouse. The roof was sunken in and the floors had collapsed, and only the walls remained standing. It was covered in vines, as if the

earth, reluctant to see it fall, held it fast, refusing to surrender the brick and mortar to time and gravity. Somewhere in the distance a parking sign, loose in its moorings, wobbled slowly in the breeze, squeaking back and forth. He was reminded of the pheasant weathervane they had built from sheet metal, and how it squeaked as it turned from the cupola on the barn that stood where his car was now parked. In his mind's eye he could see the weathervane pointing into the wind, the proud swell of the cockbird's breast, the long tailfeathers curved slightly in exact attitude.

Plastic shopping bags and paper blown across the parking lot were strewn profusely in the bushes and throughout the trees, quaking and rattling in the breeze, but when Max closed his eyes he heard an older wind rustling through the corn.

MAX AND HIS FATHER walked the dirt lane from their own farmhouse a half mile up the road to join his Uncle Hank and cousin Bill at their home for breakfast and a morning of bird hunting. Max carried his new double-barrel shotgun crooked in his arm, like his father did, while trying to match his father's long strides step for step. The dusty dirt lane was a tapestry of pheasant tracks, and he could see birds running across the road ahead.

Max remembered certain days in terms of color, when the temperament of the day and emotions and events could be summed up in a single color. That glorious October day was remembered as yellow-gold. He remembered walking into the farmhouse kitchen, sunlight streaming in through the window and across the long pine table, his aunt turning from the big wood stove with eggs bubbling in the pan. In the field, bright yellow ears of corn, some pecked by the pheasants, revealing the crimson cobs. Scores of yellow pumpkins grown in the corn, as they did back then, glistened in the sun, and beyond, ragged lines of yellow hedgerows looked like seams of exposed gold.

The men were in no hurry to get out; the morning chores were done and the frost was burning off and the birds were there. They ate and talked, and Max and Bill were eager to try their new shotguns on game. They had saved every penny from their traplines to purchase identical Lefever double-barrel shotguns. After exhaustive searches through mail order catalogs and sporting magazines they debated long and hard about which make and model would best fit their budget. They finally settled on the Lefever, swayed in part by the company's long time advertising slogan, "Who ever saw a broken Lefever?" That line taken from a testimonial letter sent to the company by a Pennsylvania hunter was good enough for them.



The boys knew they would be hunting together for a long time, and agreed they should use the same gauge, should they need to share shells, but even that decision took days to resolve, and they compromised by settling on the 16.

They had done much pass shooting on crows during late summer, hiding in the hedgerows as the crows went to roost. The crows slid over their blinds like oil over water, and were fairly easy to bring down, but Max and Bill honed their shooting skills nevertheless, learning proper

lead and estimating distance. Pheasants, however, were an entirely different matter.



Max recalled the first rooster that rose in front of his barrels. It caught him by surprise, flushing from some low grass that wouldn't hold a field mouse, chugging skyward, the Orient Express itself bedecked in feathers, steaming for the clouds. Forgetting everything he learned in the summer crow fields, Max missed wildly.

Max's father pushed out a hedgerow of blackberry canes, Max on one side, Bill on the other, Uncle Hank bringing up the rear. A brace of cockbirds flushed suddenly, splitting left and right, with Max and Bill's shots ringing out as one, and then both roosters hitting the ground at almost the same instant. A golden moment that they talked about for years.

MAX PICKED UP A STICK AND POKED at some brush until it struck something hard beneath the tangles. He slid the stick under the vines and pried upward, revealing an old millstone with an alternating pattern of lines on the face, filled now with fine moss. He was surprised to see that no one had taken it, that it hadn't ended up outside some antique emporium.

Their great-grandfather had brought the stone with him when he had moved from Chester County. It had been in the family for years. The stone was fashioned in the early 1700s and was of no particular use on the farm, serving only as a reminder of their heritage. It made a fine monument, and his aunt had planted day lilies around it. Sometimes on summer evenings Uncle Hank would sit on the stone, and in his resonant velvet-over-steel voice, tell them tales of redcoats and colonists from the Brandywine country where the stone had been used.

Max walked out to the other side of the woods and saw the dozers and construction trailer parked nearby. Even this sorry patch of woods would not be spared. He turned and walked back through, and as he ducked beneath a limb he spied a deer track in the soil. He kneeled to study it. It was fresh, and the crisp edges of it caught red light from the huge plastic letters of the illuminated mall sign. He was astonished to find deer tracks in the small woods.



Occasionally, they would find deer sign on the farm, and by the time he was a senior in high school, there was evidence that the local herd was increasing and expanding. Max set out alone to hunt deer one morning with a pewtery .32 Winchester Special. It had snowed the day before and into the night, enough to rim his high-topped boots. The morning dawned bright and brutally frigid. A huge mass of cold air driven by powerful winds muscled into the valley, air so cold it could not have come from some distant prairie or northern province, but from another world.

He plodded across the fields toward the big woods where he had last seen some deer sign. Snow devils jousted playfully across the open expanse, and he walked into one that enveloped him with ice particles fine as diamond dust that reflected prisms of color in the sunlight. He pulled his scarf up over his nose and felt the

tug of ice building up on the other side where his breath came through.

Max walked all day, and late in the afternoon he eased through a windbreak of staggered pines bordering a lane. He came over the embankment above the lane where the wind had blown the snow and saw a set of deer tracks. He glanced ahead and caught a flicker of movement in the woods and saw deer moving through the long blue shadows. A small buck hesitated at the cusp of a hollow and the front bead caught the sun at his back and glowed like a firefly on the buck's dark shoulder. The gun roared, and Max tried to lever another round but the action was frozen. He unbuttoned his jacket, tucked the receiver under his armpit until it warmed up, then levered a fresh round.

It took a long time to dress out the buck, his fingers numbing instantly when he stopped. He warmed his hands by holding the big meaty heart in one hand then the other, like a hot river stone taken from a campfire. Max slid the deer along the scalloped swells on the lee side of the drifts where the snow had thinned. He stopped to rest, and when he looked up, he thought the sight of his home in the pale violet shadows was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

MAX LOOKED UP FROM the deer track and spotted his wife in her bright yellow jacket waiting for him at the mall entrance.

A few days later Max returned to the woods in a pickup, but the woods was not there; not the huge sycamore, or even a single brick from the farmhouse. The crew was loading the last dump truck and Max asked the foreman if they still had the millstone.

"You're just in time, it's in that last pile of brush there. You can have it if you want, because it's headed for the landfill. We'll even put it in your pickup for you."

Max walked across the vacant site. It was divided up with plastic surveyor tape, and all that remained was a dark wet wound where the perpetual seep bled into the yellow ground.



Max had some neighborhood teens roll the millstone onto his wife's flowerbed mound. That night Max dreamed this dream: It was of a future time when the days of man had passed. He sat high in a sycamore, admiring the view, taking in the sounds. All around, everything was changing rapidly before his eyes. The mall was sinking from view, and in its stead rose the rim of a dark and endless forest, while shimmering wild fields blanketed the parking lots. The faintest stars gained purchase in the dusky sky, and below him a deer walked along the seep.

While Max dreamed his dream, the doe and her fawn, persistent creatures of habit, made their way down to where the small woods had been. Without the security of nearby cover they lingered only briefly, then turned and headed back. Unless Max's dream held any element of truth, they were the last of their kind to make tracks upon that anonymous ground.

FIELD NOTES

Quite a Ride

POTTER — Despite bear biologist Mark Ternent taking me on a "death march," getting my truck stuck and spilling tattoo ink in my new vehicle, it was a great experience locating bear den sites.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, COUDERSPORT



Dinner Bell

HUNTINGDON — WCO Roller and I were with a logger, checking on a bear den site, when we commented on the abundant deer tracks. The logger said the deer come in every night after the chainsaws cease, looking for the freshly cut browse.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Where Were They?

A gentleman called the region office in mid-January saying he had something he "just had to tell somebody about." He figured that the heavy snow and ice for an extended period of time here would have taken a toll on the deer herd, but while spotlighting one night he was amazed to count 63 deer (three or four were nice bucks still sporting antlers) in a Wyoming County field. The property is enrolled in one of our public access programs and is heavily hunted, too.

— DIANE GRIMES, DISPATCHER, NORTHEAST REGION OFFICE

Adaptable

ELK — During deer season some hunters commented about the lack of deer, and even my deputies and I were seeing fewer. Just after the season, though, deer and deer tracks seemed to be everywhere. One property owner who lives next to a game lands here mentioned that most of the bucks he had been seeing before the season showed up again in his clover field right after the season closed. Some of those bucks should be real trophies next year, providing hunters can find them during the season.

— WCO DICK BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Surprise

Brian Barratt arrowed a large doe during the archery season and followed the trail into a hemlock thicket. On his hands and knees Brian approached a cluster of small trees, which appeared to be shaking. Believing that his deer was in this clump of hemlocks, he slowly parted the branches, peered inside, and was shocked to see a bear staring back at him, only a couple of feet away. Man and beast went in opposite directions in a hurry.

— LMO KEITH SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE

Truth is Out

CHESTER — The region dispatcher called me, saying that Deputy Lew Wilson had been trying to reach me on the radio, because he needed assistance. He gave me the deputy's location, and then said that Lew didn't want to put any more information out over the radio. I quickly drove to Lew's location, thinking he had a major violation. When I got there Lew said, "I sure hope you have your cell phone with you." He then explained that he had lost his in the woods and needed me to dial his number so its ring would lead us to it.

— WCO KEITH W. MULLIN, OXFORD

Real Bargain

CENTRE — My nephew from Ohio told me that it's cheaper to hunt as a nonresident in Pennsylvania than as a resident in Ohio. He has to buy a general hunting license and then additional stamps for deer and turkey, and then a mandatory $20 state migratory bird stamp. He says Pennsylvania hunters don't know how lucky they are.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Read the Digest

WASHINGTON — Many hunters are aware that the Game Code requires them to make an effort to retrieve game that they have shot, but some individuals think this requirement allows them to trespass, which it certainly does not. Hunters need to ask for permission from the property owner before entering to retrieve game, and shooting hours end at the times listed in the Hunting Hours Table, and laws regarding safety zones are not suspended when a wounded animal enters one. Every year someone tries to use this as an excuse for breaking one law or another. On the evening of the first day of deer season, a landowner and three hunters got into a fight when the hunters entered posted property to retrieve a deer.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Big Cat

LACKAWANNA — A roadkilled female bobcat measured 44 inches from head to tail and had a particularly large head. Bobcat sightings have certainly increased in residential areas in my district.

— WCO MARK RUTKOWSKI, TAYLOR

Better Than a Lab?

MCKEAN — Susquehanna River waterfowl hunters Russ Maurer and Larry Koppenhaver were trying to retrieve a mallard that Russ had shot, when a bald eagle swooped from the sky and also attempted to get the duck. The eagle missed and apparently was spooked by the boat, because it didn't make a second pass.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT



Puzzling?

TIOGA — Fortunately for me, PennDOT has a contractor who picks up roadkilled deer on state roads in my district, because of the many calls I've been receiving reporting dead deer on highways. I'm perplexed about the number of roadkills, though, because the deer population is supposedly low here.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Ouch!

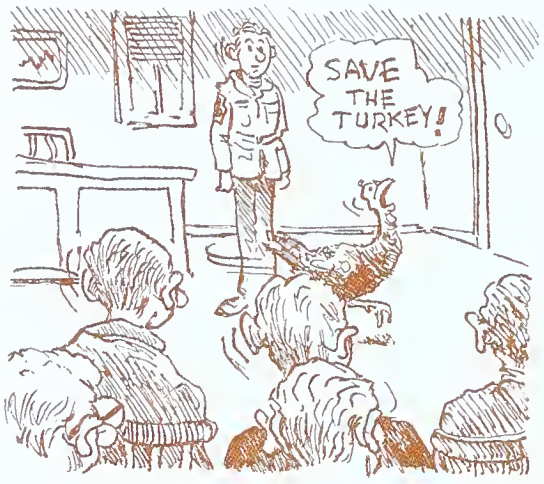
VENANGO — Deputy Gail Bean and I apprehended two individuals from Texas for poaching a deer. One individual mentioned that the deer are bigger in Texas, but that it costs about $700 for a resident to hunt for three days, because most of the land is private. I'm not sure if the man's figure is accurate, but a one-night "deer hunt" in Pennsylvania cost them more than $2,250 in fines.

— DEPUTY NEAL BRITTON, CHAPMANVILLE

All the Signs

MONTGOMERY — Deputy Joe Miles and I noticed a vehicle pulling forward, backing up, stopping and then opening the passenger side door to look at something, adjacent to a woodlot behind an industrial area where we had been getting calls about roadhunting. Upon confronting the suspects, I'm not sure who was more surprised. The gentleman teaching his daughter how to parallel park or us.

— WCO TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, FREDERICK



Feathered Instructor

BUCKS — WCO John Denchak was conducting some classroom training at SGL 182 when a turkey wandered into the room and headed right to the front of the classroom. The hen putted and clucked while standing next to John before walking back out the door.

— DEPUTY WALT SHIMP, YARDLEY

A Real Trooper

MERCER — Penn State student and Army reserve sergeant Chris Felege from Lake City recently returned from 15 months active duty, with 12 months in Iraq. Soon after he returned he signed up with the PGC as a goose, duck and dove banding volunteer. Chris did his two weeks of goose banding covering four regions of the state, and then helped biologist aide Susan Ellis band doves. Thank you, Chris, for your tour of duties both here and abroad.

— DEPUTY BRUCE ELLIS, MERCER

Early Birds

ERIE — Dennis Shannon told me that over the Christmas holiday he noticed a goose that he thought was injured. To his surprise, though, the goose was sitting on a nest of four eggs. Neither of us figured the eggs would hatch, but about two weeks later four goslings hatched. I don't know if they survived, but if they did, their migration instinct has got to be fouled up.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Doing What it Does Best

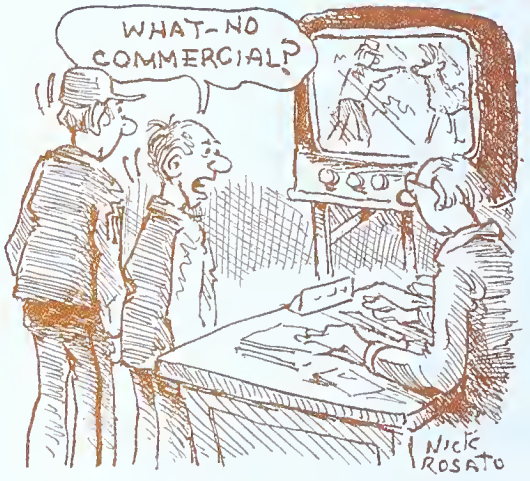
ADAMS — I got a message to respond to a call from a woman whose dog got into a scrap with an opossum. The woman said she put the dead 'possum in a box to have it tested for rabies. When I called the next morning to get the address to pick it up, though, the woman said she thought I had picked it up, because the box was empty. When I told her I hadn't been over yet, she said, "Well, I guess it was just playin' 'possum."

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, EAST BERLIN

Time is No Obstacle

VENANGO — WCO Len Hribar and I served an arrest warrant on an individual who had been cited for poaching a deer in 1994. The man had arranged time payments to pay more than $800 in fines, but failed to make his final payment. Needless to say, the individual was shocked when we showed up 10 years later to collect the money.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, FRANKLIN



Undisputable

CLINTON — The defendant in court continuously mumbled denials as I testified during his trial for shooting at a deer decoy. You could hear a pin drop, though, when I showed a video of him doing exactly what I said he had done. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth volumes.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Friendly Activity

During deer season I checked four hunters, with three deer, who were all from different states (Pennsylvania, Washington, North Carolina and Ohio) but hunting together. They explained that the three out-of-state individuals were originally from Pennsylvania, and that they enjoy getting together every year to hunt.

— LMO Dale E. Hockenberry, East Butler

Can't Win

Somerset — You'd think that having the highest point in Pennsylvania (Mt. Davis) in your district would provide the ideal location for a cell phone. Not a chance — I get a no service notification every time I try to call from the top of the mountain.

— WCO Brian E. Witherite, Meyersdale

Out and About

Cambria — Deputy Dave Vasses said a man who resides in Cambria Township saw about 80 deer in a 5-mile stretch of road while spotlighting during a warm spell in January.

— WCO Lawrence Olsavsky, Hastings

Surfaced

Crawford — A couple of ice-fishermen told me they were seated inside their ice shanty when a muskrat popped up from one of the holes and climbed up on the ice between them. The muskrat slipped back into the hole and disappeared in a hurry, though, as if to agree that two is company and, in that little shanty, three was definitely a crowd.

— WCO Mark A. Allegro, Meadville

Vicious Cycle

Somerset — WCOs see a lot of different places and people, and I've been in six districts in the past three years. I finally found a home back in Somerset County, though.

— WCO Travis Anderson, Somerset



"You Go, Girl"

Forest — On the first day of deer season, deputies Lawrence Hergenroeder, Steve Baxter and I were checking hunters when we came upon two young fellows dragging a heavy beamed, large-bodied buck out of the woods with a young lady following behind. When we asked who was the lucky hunter, the young lady immediately exclaimed, "That's my buck, I got it!" She said she also got a big doe earlier in the morning, and had a DMAP tag to fill later that afternoon. The young lady was hunting with her fiancé and two younger brothers, who said they didn't even get to hunt much, because they were exhausted from dragging her deer all morning. To top it off, the young lady was carrying a .30-30 rifle with open sights.

— WCO Mario L. Piccrilli, Marienville

Similar Purpose

Luzerne — During a recent deer decoy operation one individual stopped his vehicle, backed up, blew the horn and eventually got out of the car and walked across the roadway clapping his hands. When I approached he indicated that he traveled the road every day and had not seen that buck before. He said he wanted to scare it away so roadhunters wouldn't get it. When I informed him that it was a decoy and that it wasn't going to run away, he was amazed and then thankful for our efforts to help curb roadhunting.

— WCO David P. Allen, Mountaintop

Black Eye for Sportsmen

HUNTINGDON — On the Monday following the close of the regular firearms deer season Food & Cover foreman Brad King noticed four deer carcasses neatly placed in a row in a parking lot visible from a main road on SGL 67. Upon investigating, two were bucks that had the antlers and hindquarters removed, and the others were a button buck and a doe with just the backstraps and hindquarters removed.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

It Happens

FRANKLIN — Last fall I was called to assist local police in removing a deer from an apartment building in Chambersburg. When I got there the mature buck was cornered in a stairwell, so I readied my tranquilizer rifle and leaned over the railing to get a clear shot at its neck. Just as I pulled the trigger, though, the buck raised his head and the bright orange dart made a dull thud when it hit the base of an antler. The deer shook his head, to either remove the dart or to just add to my embarrassment. "Nice shot," was the only comment from the police officer standing behind me. My next shot found its mark and the deer was safely removed.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

More User Friendly

LYCOMING — This county has been selected to pilot the revamped Hunter-Trapper Education program. The pilot program consists of a knowledge portion and a separate skills day. Students may receive the knowledge portion by one of three ways: the Internet; a workbook; or report to a classroom. Once a student has completed the knowledge portion, he or she must sign up for a skills day event. I would like to thank the HTE instructors who have invested much time and energy in making the program the best it can be.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT

Far and Wide

FAYETTE — On my second day after transferring back to the Southwest Region from the Southcentral, I struck up a conversation with a guy walking on SGL 238. When the gentleman said something about WCOs being spread pretty thin, I asked what he meant. He explained that I had checked his license in Blair County during deer season.

— WCO RICHARD W. JOYCE, LECHRONE



Family Time

JUNIATA — Each year WCOs usually take some time to review thousands of antlerless deer license applications that were issued by local county treasurers. In my home the entire family gets involved, with everyone taking bundles of applications and checking them for names on Dad's "special list," or for something unusual. We often find names of friends, neighbors, people we went to school with, and even the occasional hunter who somehow manages to apply for a license from beyond the grave.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

All in a Name

BLAIR — I received a call to see about a sick wild animal in Allegheny Township. The residence was located in the Fox Hollow Estates on Fox Drive. Yes, the sick critter was a gray fox, probably just looking for his old "fox hollow" hunting grounds.

— WCO STEPHEN T. HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE

Doe study underway

THE GAME Commission and researchers from the Pennsylvania Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State University have launched a 3-year study designed to measure the survival of female white-tailed deer and how they respond to hunting pressure in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 2G and 4B.



Lori Richardson

KODI HOCKENBERRY, WALTER "DEET" JAMES, CHRISTY HOPE and CHRISTINE HOSKINSON are working to capture deer in WMU 4B. Another team of bioaides is capturing female deer in WMU 2G. Plans call for the capture and monitoring of 70 deer a year on each study area.

Specifically, the study is designed to determine: What percentage of female deer survive from one hunting season to the next; what factors influence survival of female deer; what is hunter density on public and private lands; how do female deer respond to hunter movements; and what factors affect a female deer's vulnerability to harvest.

"Monitoring survival rates and harvest vulnerability of female white-tailed deer are two important components of the deer management program," said PGC biologist Dr. Christopher Rosenberry, who designed the research project. "However, limited field-based information is available on the survival rates of female white-tailed deer in Pennsylvania.

"Female survival rates can affect a deer herd in a variety of ways, including sex and age ratios, productivity and recruitment into the fall population. Establishing field-based survival rates of female deer will strengthen the Game Commission's ability to evaluate changes in deer populations."

Dr. Duane Diefenbach, with the Pennsylvania Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State, noted that shedding light on how deer respond to hunting pressure should provide insight into how we can improve deer management strategies.

"Hunting pressure varies based on land ownership, road networks and topography," Diefenbach said. "The effect of public versus private land hunting is a topic of interest among hunters and Game Commission staff.

This research will provide insight into hunter densities and distribution on public lands and surrounding private lands and the response of female deer to hunting pressure."

Bret Wallingford, Game Commission biologist, noted that the research is being done in WMU 2G, the northern forests commonly referred to as "The Big Woods" area; and in WMU 4B, the ridge and valley region of the state's heartland. Initially, study activities will be focused in and around state forests. The crews are planning to collar 70 does per study area per year. In subsequent years, study activities will expand outward from state forests, to encompass a variety of public and private lands and habitats.

"In winter and early spring, research crews will be capturing deer using drop nets, rocket nets and clover traps, like those used for the buck survival and movement study," said Wallingford, who is coordinating field activities for the project. "Female deer will be collared with radio tracking devices that will allow their movements and survival to be monitored."

During hunting seasons, aerial surveys will be flown to determine density and distribution of hunters. Deer response to hunting pressure will be monitored with radio collars.

"We will be tracking deer to map their home range," Diefenbach said. "Then, during the hunting season, we plan to use aerial surveys to estimate hunter density and map the distribution of hunters, to see how hunter density is related to deer home ranges.

"Also, some of the does will be fitted with GPS collars, which will mark the locations of the deer every hour during the hunting season, allowing researchers to see how deer move when being hunted. This should be of great interest to hunters and deer managers. We know deer don't leave their home range just because of hunting pressure, but we are interested to see what parts of their home range they do use when pressure is greatest."

"Hunters should treat deer with collars and ear tags as any other deer," Wallingford stressed. "If a marked deer is legal, then it may be taken. Indeed, hunters should not pass on marked deer, because hunting mortality is a part of this study.

"Hunters who take marked deer are asked to call the number on the collar or ear tag, so information about the deer can be collected."

This study is the latest in a series of studies being used to guide and refine deer management. Other studies include a fawn survival study (2000-2001); a buck survival and movement study (2001-2005); a rut timing and conception study (2000-present); an antler measurement study (2000-2001); an evaluation of deer harvest estimates and reporting rates (2003-2004); and chronic wasting disease surveillance (1998-present).

Wayne and Monroe county incidents results in numerous charges

UPON investigation stemming from a roadhunting incident during the firearms deer season, WCO James P. McCarthy filed charges against several individuals for unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife (deer), using a motor vehicle to locate game, hunting in a safety zone, alighting from a motor vehicle and shooting from the roadway, having loaded firearms in a motor vehicle, lending a license to another, possessing a tag or license of

another, and failure to report big game kills.

Charged were Harry Francis Sinawa, 33, Forest City; Joseph Ronald Sinawa, 31, Jermyn; Rodney Sinawa, 46, Waymart; James Sinawa, 53, Waymart; Jack E. Sinawa, 58, Waymart; and Edward D. Sinawa, 63, Somerville, New Jersey.

The investigation began on Dec. 10, when a citizen made a call to the Game Commission Northeast Region Office. "The witness saw a deer shot from the roadway," WCO McCarthy said. "After preliminary interviews, more and more information about other incidents were uncovered. Basically what happened was that some of these men would drive around in a pickup until they spotted a deer, then they would stop and shoot at it.

"I have never encountered a group so brazen. One individual even rode in the truck bed, with a firearm, so he could shoot sooner. It didn't seem to matter where the deer were, or their size or sex. Apparently, they shot at every deer they saw. At least four deer were killed, and two other illegal deer — or parts of deer — were discovered during the investigation."

During the investigation, a search warrant was served at the Sinawa residence in Waymart Borough. Seized was a large amount of venison, deer in various stages of butchering, firearms, licenses, and assorted parts of deer. Waterways Conservation Officer David Kaneski assisted during the interview process.

"This was truly a multi-agency effort, with help from the Pennsylvania State Police, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Game Commission Deputy WCOs," McCarthy noted.

The charges were filed before District Justice Ron Edwards, Lakewood, Wayne County. If convicted on all counts, the men together face a total of $26,025 in fines and revocation of their hunting privileges for several years.

In Monroe County

In Monroe County, WCO Pete Sussenbach recently filed charges against Jan Pyatt of Tobyhanna. Charges include 14 counts of unlawful possession of white-tailed deer and three counts of unlawful possession of wild turkeys. In addition, WCO Sussenbach filed several crimes code charges.

In mid-October, WCO Sussenbach received information about Pyatt baiting a bear to his residence. Upon investigation, it was learned that corn, syrup, sausages and other items were being used to entice a bear to the area. It also was discovered that Pyatt had purchased several licenses unlawfully and had an 8-point buck at a taxidermist in Montgomery County that had

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

been tagged with another individual's tag.

On November 22, a search warrant was executed at Pyatt's residence. During the search, deer, turkeys and other unlawfully possessed wildlife was uncovered, as well as a large quantity of evidence relative to the unlawful killing of other wildlife. It also was determined that other individuals had come to Pyatt's property and unlawfully killed various wildlife.

Game and Wildlife Code charges were filed before District Justice Clancy Dennis, Tobyhanna. If convicted on all counts, Pyatt faces up to $15,000 in fines and suspension of hunting and furtaker license privileges for nearly 50 years.

Four PGC rifle ranges temporarily closed

FOUR PGC rifle ranges have been closed and will remain so until the estimated $163,000 needed to make the safety improvements, which includes costs for lead management, can be found. The closed ranges are on SGL 50, Somerset County; SGL 91, Luzerne County; Area 416 (Indian Rock), York County; and on SGL 157, Bucks County.

"Last summer, Mike Stover, chief of the PGC's Engineering and Contract Management Division, began conducting safety and lead management inspections at agency ranges across the state, starting with the most heavily used facilities," said PGC Land Management Bureau Director Scott Klinger. "During those inspections and subsequent evaluations, conditions at the four noted ranges were determined to constitute a possible risk to developed areas within projected downrange impact zones.

To date, 25 of the PGC's 41 official ranges — as well as many other, unofficial ranges — have been inspected and remedial workplans developed to correct safety and lead management concerns.

As a first step in implementing these plans, a package of six of the most heavily used range complexes (one in each of the PGC's six regions) will be submitted to various national firearms use and support organizations for grant funding. If funding is received, the six projects will be undertaken as pilot projects to verify safety improvement designs and construction methodologies.

Additional funding sources are being explored for completing improvements at all other shooting ranges.

For more about Game Commission ranges, go to **www.pgc.state.pa.us**, click on "State Game Lands" and scroll down to "Public Shooting Ranges."

Official 2004 bear harvest figures

THE FINAL harvest report for the statewide 3-day bear season and extended season shows hunters took 2,972 bears, the fourth largest bear harvest on record.

"Bear hunting in Pennsylvania has been absolutely exceptional," said Game Commission executive director Vern Ross. "The state's six largest bear harvests — all exceeding 2,500

bears — have occurred during the past seven years. And in the "lean" year, 1999, hunters took 1,740 bears.

Hunters took 2,425 bears during the 3-day season, and 547 during the extended season held in all or parts of WMUs 2G, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E.

Lycoming County led the state with a bear harvest of 244, followed by Clinton, 218; Pike, 155; Luzerne 138; Wayne, 135; Tioga, 119; and McKean, 103.

A total of 56 bears weighing 500 or more pounds were taken. The largest was an 834-pound (estimated live weight) male taken by 17-year-old Jeremy B. Kresge of Blakeslee at 4:15 p.m. Nov. 23, in Tunkhannock Township, Monroe County. Other top bears include a 671-pounder taken by Ray H. Reed of Howard, in Centre County; a 660-pounder taken by Ritchie L. Kitchen of Clearfield, in Clearfield County; and a 660-pounder taken by David A. Benjamin Sr. of Weston, in Luzerne County,

Two exceptional bears were taken in the extended season: a 658-pounder taken by David R. Horvath of Springtown, in Carbon County; and a 631-pounder, taken in Lebanon County by Irvin L. Horst of Myerstown.

The bear harvest by WMU (2003's harvest results in parentheses) were: **WMU 1A**, 6 (3); **WMU 1B**, 21 (39); **WMU 2C**, 187 (218); **WMU 2D**, 103 (139); **WMU 2E**, 67 (100); **WMU 2F**, 195 (204); **WMU 2G**, 632 (718); **WMU 3A**, 163 (153); **WMU 3B**, 321 (298); **WMU 3C**, 200 (129); **WMU 3D**, 419 (413); **WMU 4A**, 40 (63); **WMU 4B**, 22 (16); **WMU 4C**, 278 (119); **WMU 4D**, 247 (317); **WMU 4E**, 69 (71); **WMU 5C**, 1 (0). There was one additional bear for which harvest location information was not available.

County harvests by region (with 2003's harvest figures in parenthesis) were: **Northwest:** Forest, 50 (43); Warren, 48 (71); Jefferson, 45 (54); Venango, 36 (40); Clarion, 31 (40); Butler, 5 (6); and Crawford, 3 (6).

Southwest: Fayette, 57 (61); Indiana, 53 (69); Somerset, 51 (75); Westmoreland, 44 (29); Armstrong, 35 (57); and Cambria, 21 (27).

Northcentral: Lycoming, 244 (202); Clinton, 218 (193); Tioga, 119 (156); McKean, 103 (129); Cameron, 95 (102); Centre, 95 (122); Clearfield, 94 (101); Potter, 87 (124); Elk, 73 (87); and Union, 26 (46).

Southcentral: Huntingdon, 73 (94); Blair, 26 (38); Bedford, 25 (40); Mifflin, 25 (28); Juniata, 11 (11); Snyder, 11 (18); Fulton, 6 (2); Franklin, 2 (0); Cumberland, 1 (2); and Perry, 1 (2).

Northeast: Pike, 155 (147); Luzerne, 138 (103); Wayne, 135 (130); Carbon, 95 (44); Monroe, 82 (112); Susquehanna, 80 (37); Bradford, 72 (59); Wyoming, 59 (42); Columbia, 57 (42); Sullivan, 56 (86); Lackawanna, 54 (37); and Northumberland, 14 (11).

Southeast: Schuylkill, 66 (39); Dauphin, 50 (14); Lebanon, 19 (4); Berks, 16 (3); Northampton, 14 (6); and Lehigh, 5 (7).

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL'S East Ohio/Northwest PA Chapter has donated four Canon digital cameras to the PGC's Land Management Group Supervisors in the Northwest Region. "These cameras will have a huge impact on our ability to document land management practices and problems," said Northwest Region Land Management Supervisor William P. Anderson, left. "With today's computer technology, we are able to send images in a matter of minutes about the wildlife habitat work taking place on State Game Lands. We are grateful to Safari Club International for this generous donation."



"We're pleased to work with the Game Commission," said Mike Drewnowski, SCI director and past president of the East Ohio/Northwest Pennsylvania Chapter, "to help with the valuable land management work on State Game Lands. Safari Club International is committed to improving habitat for all types of wildlife."

Spring gobbler season approaching

JUNIOR hunting license holders will again get the chance to hunt gobblers on the Saturday before the opening of the general spring gobbler season. The special youth hunt this year is April 23. Like last year, those youngsters who participate are required to have a junior hunting license. Juniors under 16 must be accompanied by an adult, who may not carry a sporting arm. Accompanying adults may only provide guidance, such as calling or scouting. All other hunting regulations are the same as those for the general spring gobbler season, including hunting from one-half hour before sunrise until noon and only bearded turkeys may be taken.

Of course, during the one-day season for junior hunters and throughout the spring gobbler season, safety must remain of paramount importance.

Hunting regulations require all hunters to wear at least 100 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head (hat), while moving through the woods. If hunters opt to remove their orange after reaching their calling position, the Game Commission encourages them to display a fluorescent orange alert band, or some other fluorescent orange item, near their hunting position, as a way of alerting other hunters who may be in the area that a person is nearby. Hunters also are encouraged to place decoys in a way that will limit their susceptibility to in-the-line-of-fire discharges from approaching hunters.

To make sure your next turkey hunting experience is both safe and enjoyable, follow these turkey hunting safety tips:

Positively identify your target. Be absolutely certain it's a legal turkey before pulling the trigger. Never shoot at sounds or movement.

Never stalk a turkey or turkey sounds. Stalking during the spring season is illegal. Movement or sounds you

think are a turkey may be another hunter. Be patient. Let the bird come to you.

Assume every noise and movement is another hunter. If there is any doubt whatsoever - don't shoot.

Pre-select a zone of fire. Shoot at a turkey only in your predetermined zone of fire — and only when you're certain it's safe.

Make your position known to other hunters - wear fluorescent orange. It is mandatory to wear orange when moving through the woods. It is recommended that you display orange at your calling location by wrapping a fluorescent orange band around a tree to alert other hunters of your presence.

Protect your back. Select a large tree, rock or other substantial natural barrier while calling and sit with your back against it. To improve your visibility, hunt in open woods.

Shout "STOP" to alert approaching hunters. Never move, wave or make turkey sounds to alert hunters of your position.

Eliminate red, white, blue and black colors from your clothing. These colors are found on the head, neck and body of mature gobblers. You could be mistaken for a turkey if you wear these colors.

DCNR launches aerial deer survey

AN INFRARED camera-equipped plane has begun flying over 250,000 acres of state forestland to access white-tailed deer populations. The crew and a specially equipped plane of Vision Air Research Inc., Boise, Idaho, will be flying over sections of the Delaware, Sproul, Susquehannock, Bald Eagle, Tioga and Tuscarora state forests, Parker Dam State Park, and the Hicks Run area of Elk, Cameron and Elk counties.

Using the latest aerial infrared sensor technology, which records heat-generated images, crews will obtain filmed evidence of deer in the forests below and interpret the results.

Targeted acreage includes the PGC's doe and fawn mortality study areas, as well as portions of the state forestland enrolled in the agency's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP).

"DCNR, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and hunters all want the same thing, an accurate estimate of the number of deer living in state forest tracts and game lands," said DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis. "By combining this data with information about the conditions of our habitat, we'll be in a much better position to determine deer densities for specific areas."

"Such flights will help provide a snap-shot picture in time about where deer are, based on how many can be viewed through the cover, said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "I'm pleased that Secretary DiBerardinis has made this technology available to the Game Commission."

"These flights will tell us approximately how many deer are in these areas, and planned forest regeneration studies will tell us what type of habitat is already there," said DiBerardinis. "Findings in both efforts may lead to relaxed DMAP requests in some areas; more in others. Even where deer numbers are now low, over browsing inhibits new growth. When the habitat recovers, it will be able to support larger and healthier deer populations."

For more on Vision Air Research, visit **www.visionairresearch.com**.

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

West Virginia

Hunters harvested 10,461 turkeys during the 2004 spring gobbler season — about 16.5 percent lower than in 2003. The top five counties last spring were Mason, 393; Preston, 335; Summers, 312; Raleigh, 297; and Roane, 294.

Illinois

Hunters took a record-setting 15,066 turkeys during the 2004 spring season — up from the 14,627 taken during the 2003 spring season. The top five counties were JoDaviess, 696; Pike, 620; Adams, 502; Fulton, 437; and Macoupin, 401.

Maryland

There were 2,760 turkeys taken by hunters during the 2004 spring gobbler season — a 12 percent drop from the near-record harvest of 3,120 taken in 2003. The highest harvest counties were Allegany, 387; Garrett, 325; and Washington, 305.

Massachusetts

There were 2,068 turkeys taken by hunters during the 2004 spring season — down from the 2,217 taken in 2003. Thirty-one birds were taken by archers, and the harvest included 17 bearded hens. The largest turkey weighed 26.5 pounds.

Arkansas

Hunters took 16,969 turkeys during the 2004 spring season — a 15 percent decrease from the record 19,947 taken in 2003. The decrease was due to a population drop caused by poor reproduction during the past two breeding seasons. The 2004 season marked the beginning of a statewide special youth turkey hunt before the regular hunting season. Hunters under 16 years of age got 740 turkeys during the two-day hunt.

North Carolina

A good wild turkey hatch in 2004 bodes well for hunters this spring. More than 5,000 turkeys were seen in the 2004 Summer Brood Survey, with hens averaging nearly three poults each. Biologists say that anytime there are three poults per hen it indicates a good hatch. The survey indicated that nearly 70 percent of all hens observed had poults, with an average of around four poults per hen. The 30 percent of hens that didn't have poults — many of them juveniles — lowered the overall per-hen total to 2.8 for the state. The best hatch was in the Piedmont, with 3.0 poults per hen, compared to 2.8 in the Coastal Region and 2.7 in the mountains.

Maryland

Hunters took 207 turkeys in the three western counties open for a one-week season last fall. The harvest is a 26 percent increase from the 164 birds taken in 2003. Allegany County led in the harvest with 107, followed by Garrett, 67; and Washington, 33. More than 45 percent of the turkeys were taken on public lands.

Just like in hockey, deer hunters get credited with "assists" when they help another "score" on a deer, whether it's directly or indirectly.

Extra Credit

BARRING BAD FORTUNE, next hunting season my husband should get his 100th deer. He began hunting as a youngster, in the early 1960s, and has hunted several states, so having shot one deer shy of 100 isn't an unlikely tally. He wasn't aiming to hit that mark, either; he's just a natural born record keeper.

According to him, I have 71 deer to my credit. I've been hunting since 1969, but went several years before getting a deer. Number 100 and number 72 were not to be this past season, although we both had our chances. After the final moments of the final deer season of 2004-05 were over, my husband said he would have liked to hit the century mark this year, rather than end with a tantalizing 99. I replied that, in a way, he had 100 — no, more than 100 — deer to his credit already. How, he asked? All your extra credit work, I replied.

Linda Steiner



In reality, he, I and lots of deer hunters (including you) can take credit for the harvest of many times the number of whitetails we have actually shot. If there are "six degrees of separation" between all of us, that is, we each know someone who knows someone who knows someone, etc., who knows someone we know, then our impact on each other's sport must reverberate in the same way. Certainly we can take at least partial credit for thousands of successful deer hunts, just by having interacted with other hunters throughout the years.

We get credit, of course, for the deer we squeeze the trigger or release the bowstring on, our direct kills. A literal straight line extends from us to these deer; full credit can be taken. But we can also think in terms of getting achievement points when we help someone to his deer. That can be either by getting the hunter to the deer or the deer to the hunter, or sometimes both.

Take my nephew's first deer, for instance. My brother, his dad, gets an additional credit for that. He was familiar with the area they were hunting and how the deer use it. He and his son took a stand where a long, deep hollow topped out and spread wide, like the open end

IT'S GREAT to share the credit for a deer with a friend, whether he helped you find a stand site, told you about a particular buck, or rattled and grunted the deer into bow range.

of a trumpet. Increasing the deer kill potential, the slope below them was spotted with clumps of mountain laurel and the hillside oak, which had produced acorns that year, were hung with grapevine tangles.

My brother knew the steep grade would be unattractive to most hunters and deer would take refuge there. Add the food and the thick cover, and it should have been just a matter of time before a whitetail came within shooting range of his son. Which it did, giving my nephew his first deer. My brother could chalk up another for himself, as an assist.

Also able to claim an assist is the person who went down over the steep bank and busted through the thicket, pushing out the deer. That hunter receives credit for the kill, too, by getting the deer to the waiting shooter. Without the deer-pusher, the one with the gun might have just had a day of looking at trees and chickadees. If it's a larger, organized drive, then everyone involved gets to lick an index finger and write a "1" in the air when the stander calls out, "It's down! I got it!"

Getting an extra-credit deer can be as intimately involved as spotting the deer for the hunter beside you.

"There's a deer. See it? Right over there."

"Where?" asks the shooter, eyes flicking frantically, finding only gray tree trunks, no brown "box" shapes that could be deer.

"See the broken snag (or the big rock or the lone pine or . . .)? Just to the left of (or right of or behind or . . .) it."

"I see it now," says the shooter, and they both fall silent. Next to "speak" is the gun.

An extra-credit deer might involve another kind of spotting. That is, taking someone for a drive, day or night (with a spotlight, when legal), and locating deer. Certainly helping another hunter find where to hunt deer or, in the case of a certain big buck, which deer to hunt, should give a person a partial claim to any subsequent deer taken. Even if we don't take the person physically to see the deer he eventually shoots, just telling him about good places to hunt or a many-tined whitetail (assuming we're willing to share the hotspot) should add to our lifetime score, too.

We can also insist on a share if we help someone become more skillful at hunting or shooting. If we start at the beginning with a newcomer and teach him (or her) how to sight-in a scoped highpower rifle, properly load black powder in the barrel and the pan of a flintlock, or how to tune a bow, then we can claim credit (humbly, of course) for every whitetail that person ever kills.

We might not be a part of building another's shooting skills, but we may give him a leg up on woodsmanship and reading and interpreting deer sign. We might take the hunter into the field with us, either on preseason scouting trips or pointing out must-see, must-know items while we're together in-season. We might show him the flattened oblongs in the leaves or melted shapes in the snow that indicate deer beds, and tell him that from the number of beds in the area, this is a popular loafing spot for deer.

Perhaps we tell him why: It's just outside of a thicket, where deer have a clear view of anything approaching, as well as escape cover nearby. When the hunter goes back and puts up his climbing treestand and arrows a deer that has ambled from feeding to its lying-up place for the day, we get to carve another metaphorical notch for ourselves.

Have you ever told someone where he or she should sit opening morning and they shot a deer there? You get credit. And has that person ever told someone else about the spot, who eventually filled his tag there? You get credit for that kill, too. The negative is you may have filled

your formerly secret spot with too many hunters, but the positive is that anything they shoot is partly "yours," at least for the purpose of your deer count.

Acquaintance circles just get larger, and your influence flows through them all. Do you talk about deer hunting and does that enthusiasm encourage others to hunt, who in turn reach out to more? Do you own property, either wild land or farmland, and have you planted something or enhanced the terrain so it attracts deer? Have those you permitted to hunt there shot deer? These kills go to your credit.

By purchasing a hunting license, you have helped with the purchase of state game lands. Considered that way, you are a part of all of the deer kills that take place there. If you bought hunting gear, the excise fees on the purchase, levied through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson), also aided in purchasing and improving game lands for wildlife. If you hunt on other property owned by the commonwealth or the federal government, such as a state forest or state park lands, the Allegheny National Forest or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land, your general tax monies help you to your deer, as well as give you an interest in what every other hunter shoots there.

By your actions and example, by your participation and even by your payments, you have a part in hundreds — if not thousands — of successful deer hunts. And, by the way, if you read this column and I have given you a hint that gets you a deer, I get credit for that one, too. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Common Bonds

Copy the letter at the end of each correct fact about blue jays, and then place each letter in the spaces below to finish the statement.

A blue jay's . . .

___ crest is blue (C)
___ length is about 15 inches (U)
___ diet consists mostly of seeds and acorns (O)
___ diet can also include gypsy and tent moth caterpillars (R)
___ habitat is primarily coniferous stands (D)
___ calls and habits are more secretive during the nesting phase (V)
___ presence is more apparent during winter (I)
___ nest is usually built on the ground (O)
___ actions are aggressive in protecting their young (D)
___ numbers are on the decline in Pennsylvania (W)
___ nest is lined with rootlets (A)
___ brood will leave the nest in two to three weeks (E)

Blue jays, crows and ravens belong to the family ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.

answers on p. 63

In spring I search for the first emerging leaves of wildflowers in . . .

Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary

Part 2

FOUR YEARS have passed since we built our 3-acre deer exclosure, and already the changes are noticeable. Tree seedlings have sprouted and grown; new wildflower species have appeared; and the deer browse line has slowly softened and filled in.

We chose to put the exclosure in a mature deciduous forest, so the changes are not as dramatic as they would be if the area had been cut and then fenced. Still, month by month, season after season, I chart the changes in what my husband Bruce named the Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary (see my column in May 2002).

In spring, I search for the first emerging leaves of wildflowers. Last spring false Solomon's-seal (or Solomon's plume as the late Lemont, PA botanist George Beatty more poetically called it) and Solomon's-seal bloomed for the first time. Beds of violets — common blue and downy yellow — covered the wet corner of the exclosure. The mayapple colony continued to spread, but not one flower has appeared yet. Pink lady's slipper, also known as moccasin flower, bloomed here and there, and a small patch of Canada mayflower sent up its first blossoms.

In summer, when the woods are dark and deep, fewer wildflowers appear. The downy rattlesnake plantain that I discovered right after the fence went up produced 31 flowers two years later. The third year there were only five blossoms and last year none. Still, the attractive evergreen, white and dark green leaves continue to multiply, and I look forward to more flowers from this orchid in the future.



Not so the lone spotted wintergreen plant I found after the fence was built in the spring of 2001.

That year the wintergreen's single bud disappeared. The following summer, on July 6, a nodding, waxy, white flower that looked as if it was made of fine porcelain dangled from the top of the stem. Luckily, Bruce photographed it, because that was the last year I found any trace of it. Since then I have repeatedly searched the exclosure for more spotted wintergreen plants, but so far I have found none.

Spotted wintergreen, also called striped wintergreen, is a member of the Pyrola family and lives in dry woods from New England to the southern United States. I have seen it growing as a ground cover in the forests of Connecticut and North Carolina. *The Plants of Pennsylvania*, by Ann Fowler Rhoads and Timothy A. Block calls it "common in wooded areas; throughout except in the northernmost counties," yet on our mountain in southcentral Pennsylvania the spotted wintergreen in the exclosure was the first I've recorded in the 33 years we have lived here.

Researchers at the USDA Forest Service's Northeastern Research Station in Warren discovered "that deer affected the abundance and density of all plants."

A far more common wildflower in midsummer, both inside and outside the exclosure, is the Indian pipe. Last summer it did especially well because of all the rain. Inside the exclosure in one small corner alone I counted over 100 plants, far more than I found in any similar habitat outside the exclosure. Yet I've never seen any sign of deer herbivory on Indian pipe.

Pinesap, its close relative, is relished by white-tailed deer, so I was pleased when it appeared in the exclosure for the first time late last summer. Thirteen large, healthy, red and gold plants bloomed amid the blackened, uplifted pipes and stems of the pollinated Indian pipes. The few pinesaps I found outside the exclosure were quickly browsed to the ground.

Another summer beauty, black Cohosh, blossomed first inside the exclosure in 2003. It also grows along our access road in the hollow above the stream, the same place where horsebalm thrives. Both species suffer some deer browsing, but horsebalm is especially hard hit. Still, I didn't expect the dozens of horsebalm plants growing waist high that now blanket the moist corner of the exclosure in mid-summer. Horsebalm, or richweed, is a member of the Mint family, and its light yellow, lemon-scented flowers retain their odor even after they have dried on their stems.

Clearweed, or coolwort, also grows in the moist corner of our exclosure. A member of the Nettle family, in late summer it sports undistinguished, branching clusters of greenish or whitish flowers.

By then white snakeroot is flourishing both inside and outside the exclosure, but especially outside. This is one wildflower that our deer never touch, unlike spotted Joe-Pye weed, which is mowed down almost as quickly as it germinates in our wet meadow.

Indian tobacco is another wildflower our deer seem to dislike. It, too, grows within and without the exclosure. So do blue-stemmed or wreath goldenrod and white wood aster. Still, both of those species are more abundant inside the exclosure than on our road bank where they also appear.

Native shrubs have also been disappearing in our woods. Yet inside the exclosure they are thriving. In the wetland corner, nine new common elderber-

ries, a red elderberry and a couple spicebushes have sprung up. New sprouts of wild azalea have appeared in the drier woodland area of the exclosure.

But the shrub that is filling in the understory most rapidly is witch hazel. Back in 1952 research forester A.B. Mickalitis called witch hazel "the most common shrub native to Pennsylvania," according to Charles Fergus in his informative book *Trees of Pennsylvania and the Northeast*. Although we've always had a scattering of witch hazel in our forest, inside the exclosure the witch hazel sprouts have formed a green ground cover, and along the trunks of the older shrubs new green leaves have emerged.

A few greenbriers, a hawthorn, many huckleberry shrubs, some blackberry canes and a spreading wild black raspberry patch are, in addition to mountain laurel our other understory species. Even the ubiquitous mountain laurel shows more sprouting and leaves inside the exclosure, indicating it, too, may be adversely affected by too many deer.



Dr. Ed Levri of the Altoona College of Penn State and his botanist wife Dr. Maureen Levri, have been studying the effect of deer herbivory on the mating system of mountain laurel in our forest for four years. With the help of students, they have labeled and numbered dozens of shrubs both inside and outside the exclosure, as they carry on their research from year to year. They suspect that deer herbivory reduces the mountain laurel's ability to produce the more desirable self-fertilized offspring.

But what of tree species? Those large trees, most between 100 and 200 years old, that we originally recorded throughout the exclosure — red maple, black and yellow birch, pignut hickory, white ash, black gum, white pine, black cherry, American elm, and white, chestnut, red and black oak — are, for the most part, flourishing. A pignut hickory did fall across the fence in July 2002, but already new hickory seedlings have sprouted. New white pine saplings are thriving, and all the oak species have produced many seedlings. Even a few American chestnuts have germinated. Most surprising of all has been the regeneration of black gum. Many are already shoulder-high saplings. Yet outside the exclosure, where the mix of trees and shade are the same, no tree seedlings of any species survive.

Those less desirable, even, in some cases, invasive natives, are only a small portion of the overall species' numbers in our exclosure. For instance, with all the rampant undergrowth, only a small patch of hay-scented fern survives, yet one study, back in 1989, found that as much as 30 percent of Pennsylvania's forest understories are blanketed in hay-scented and New York ferns. Striped and red maple seedlings — the only tree species that are regenerating in many forests — are far outnumbered in our exclosure by oak and black gum. All of the wildflowers inside the exclosure are natives. So, too, are the

native Virginia creeper and wild grape vines. The only non-natives in the exclosure are a multiflora rose and a couple Japanese barberry shrubs. Because this is an experimental plot, we are not removing them. We want to see what happens to them as the natives continue to spread.

In a recent study by researchers at the USDA Forest Service's Northeastern Research Station in Warren, in which they tested the effects of various numbers of deer on the Allegheny National Forest, they discovered "that deer affected the abundance and density of all plants; the horizontal and vertical structure of the forest; species abundance of wildflowers, shrubs, and birds; species composition and biodiversity of the forest understory and resilient versus deer-preferred foods," according to *Forest Science Review*.

"We think we know our forests," says researcher Dr. Susan Stout. "But in Pennsylvania and many other parts of the Northeast, deer abundance has changed our forest so much and for so long that we truly don't know how our forests would look without too many deer."

Certainly having our exclosure has made us acutely aware of what is *not* growing outside the fence as well as what is growing inside. It also shows us how quickly some plants recover, such as the black gum, and how slowly, if at all, other plants come back. Every year there are more surprises. ☐

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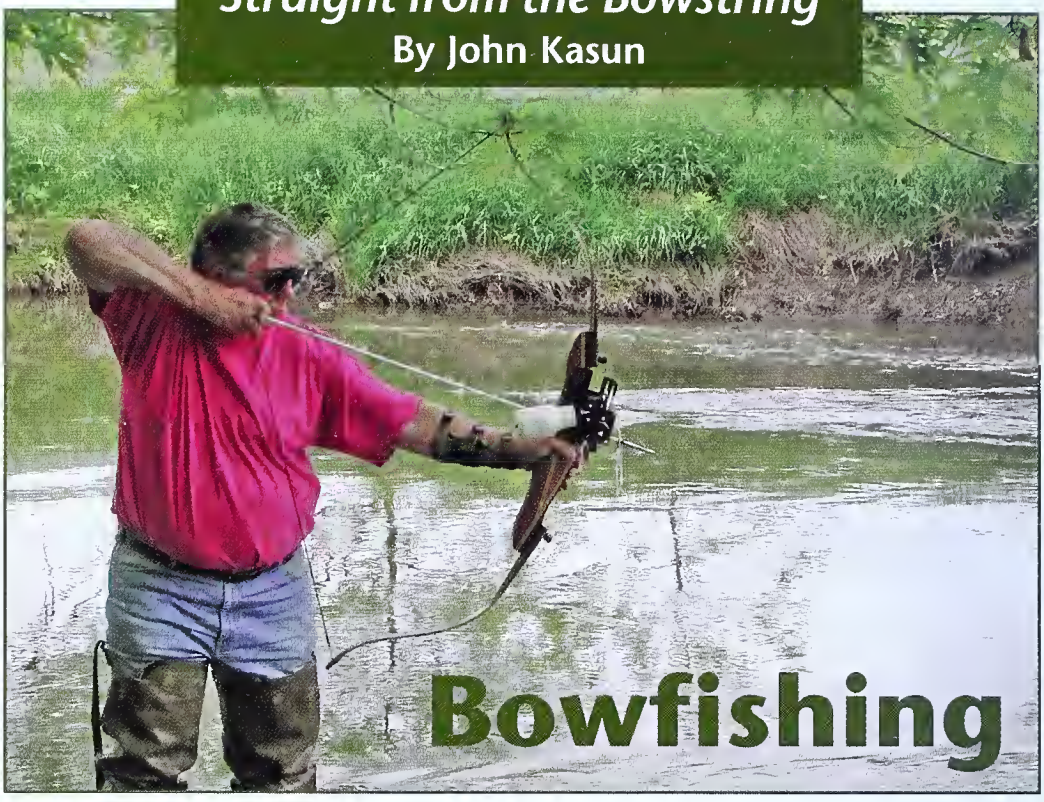
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Straight from the Bowstring

By John Kasun



Bowfishing

WHILE MANY archers focus solely on the fall bowhunting season for deer others keep active all year long, shooting in indoor leagues in the winter and 3-D tournaments in the summer. A few really dedicated bowhunters may even try hunting the wily woodchuck during long warm summer evenings. However, the one often overlooked and fun-filled opportunity for archers is bowfishing for carp.

While in Europe carp are considered a sporting game fish, here in the U.S., many consider them a nuisance at best. While fishing for carp is an enjoyable pastime, they are not considered the best table fare. As a result, with little fishing pressure, their numbers grow relatively unchecked. Further, carp exist in most of our rivers, ponds and waterways, and have become a real problem in many areas. While they can be found just about everywhere, they are most abundant in slow moving brackish rivers, as well as ponds and lakes with heavy weed beds.

Although you can legally bowfish for carp all year long, spring and summer is by far the most enjoyable time, with the spring spawn offering the best shooting opportunities. In late May and through the month of June, carp can often be seen spawning in shallow muddy flats along the shorelines of rivers, lakes and ponds. If the spring is particularly cold or the waters high, the spawn may be delayed several weeks until conditions improve. During the spawn, carp move into shallow water often 18 inches or less in depth. If available, they prefer soft bottoms, and it is not uncommon to see them right up against the shoreline or in weed beds with their backs and tails out of the water, flopping and churning in the mud. At first it may appear that shooting fish under these conditions would be as easy as shooting fish in a barrel but don't believe it. Carp may be abundant, but they are equally as wary, quickly shying away from any above water movement.

If you spot spawning fish and they spook on your approach, a little patience is all you need. When bowfishing from the

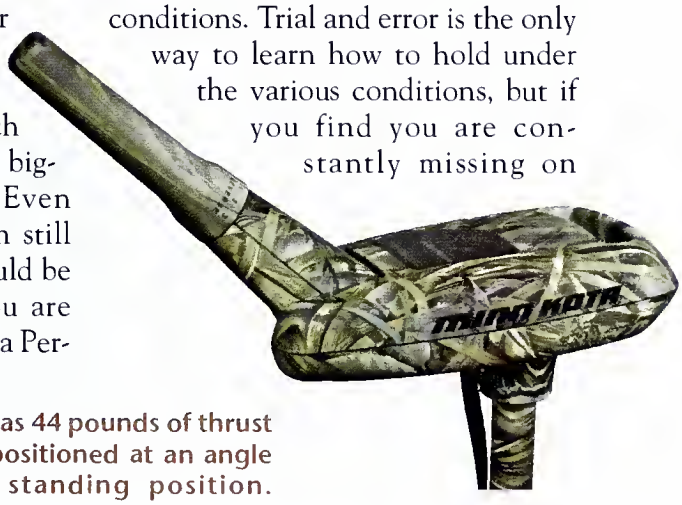
shore, approach the area where you have seen spawning fish and post yourself within shooting distance. Stand motionless, keep a low profile and avoid being silhouetted against the sky. You can often use small trees or streamside brush to help break up your outline. Whether using a boat or wading, simply get in position and remain as still as possible. After a short time the fish will return to their spawning activities, possibly giving you a quick shot.

While the spring spawn offers ideal bowfishing conditions, carp can be taken at anytime during the long hot summer months when the traditionally low and clear water makes them easy to spot as they cruise the waterways. During the summer, however, they will be in deeper water, which makes for even more challenging shooting conditions. While they were more concentrated and more distracted by their desire to spawn in the spring, summer time carp will normally be much quicker to spook. If stalking along the water's edge, move slowly upstream while keeping a sharp eye peeled for feeding fish. If using a boat you can either drift downstream with the current or use an electric motor. An electric motor is the ideal choice for bowfishing because it allows you to move slowly and quietly upstream.

Bowfishing from a boat is normally a 2-person operation. While one person keeps the boat in position, the other can be ready if a shot presents itself. While the size of the boat depends on the type of water in which you are fishing, a general rule is the bigger and more stable the better. Even though most bowfishing is done in still or slow moving currents, safety should be the first consideration. When you are bowfishing from a boat, always wear a Personal Flotation Device.

While canoes are light and easily maneuverable, they do not lend themselves well to standing and shooting. However some bowfisherman have solved this problem by adding outriggers, turning the canoe into a lightweight, stable shooting platform. A boat is almost a necessity if you intend to bowfish at night. Like many fish, carp tend to move into the shallows under the cover of darkness. A boat and a powerful light are all that is needed for some exciting nighttime action. While it is important to be as quiet as possible, so as to not spook the fish, you will find that the light does not bother them.

While bowfishing shots are taken at close range there are some drastic differences between shooting at a target on dry land and one that may be three feet under water. When shooting at carp in shallow water (under 18 inches), you can aim directly at the fish, but if a shot presents itself in deep water, the refraction of the light will make the fish appear closer to the surface than they actually are. When shooting in deep water you must hold under the fish. There is no exact method to say just how low to hold, because the light refraction varies with the depth of the water, the angle of the shot and the light conditions. Trial and error is the only way to learn how to hold under the various conditions, but if you find you are constantly missing on



MINN KOTA'S Waterfowl XL model has 44 pounds of thrust and features a handle that can be positioned at an angle enabling you to steer from a standing position.



Two bowfishing SPOOL REELS (above) and the AMS RETRIEVER reel with a line-storing canister (below).

deep shots, try holding lower.

While you can bowfish with a compound (or crossbow), mud and water doesn't mix well with compounds. Furthermore, the compound's let-off is not an advantage, because at times shots must be made quickly and often at less than full draw. For bowfishing I like a traditional recurve. One with a moderate draw weight of 40 to 50 pounds is normally sufficient. If you don't have one, they can often be found at yard sales and flea markets. For a few extra dollars, however, some excellent new bows are available. My favorite is the TD Hunter model made by AIM (Archery International Marketing). Economically priced, the TD Hunter is a take-down model, which breaks down for ease of transportation. It is a smooth shooting bow, suitable for backyard target practice as well as hunting, and makes an excellent bow for bowfishing. For more information on AIM bows visit **www.aimarchery.com**.

Accessories should be kept as simple as possible. No string peep is required, because the shooting is quick and close; a simple single metal pin sight is adequate. Normally I set the pin for 10 yards since the sight is only a reference mark. It is often necessary to hold high or low, depending upon the distance and the water depth. Although you can use a release, shooting with fingers is actually easier and quicker. Remember, when bowfishing, pinpoint accuracy is not required. Before you subject your good release to water and mud, try a few shots with a finger tab, I think you will find it works just fine.

When it comes to an arrow rest, heavy duty is the key. The arrow rest will be subjected to some rough conditions, so delicate target rests are not well suited for bowfishing. A stick-on, heavy-duty rubber rest, or a Whisker Biscuit with its special bowfishing insert works well. Check your local archery shop for several other rests designed specifically for bowfishing. A heavy, solid, fiberglass fish-arrow works best because its extra weight allows it to penetrate the water better and it will not bend if it strikes the bottom or a fish rolls over on it. Although rubber fletching is available, because of the close shooting conditions encountered during bowfishing, fletching of any type is not really necessary.

Tipping the arrow will be a heavy-duty barbed fish point. Remember these points are going to see some rough use, as they will often be striking the bottom, and if it's not mud it's going to be rock. Select a fish point on which the barbs can be quickly reversed, to allow easy arrow removal from the fish once it is has been retrieved. Muzzy, a manufacturer of excellent broadheads, offers several fish points with reversible barbs.

Next and most important is the reel and line. There are several inexpensive, simple spool-style bowfishing reels on the market that mount to the front of your bow. Some reel styles are solid and mount above or below the arrow while others allow the arrow to pass through the center of the reel. Different mounting configurations are available, using either the sight mounting holes on the bow or the stabilizer bushing. In either case, spool reels are designed so that the line is hand wrapped around the reel; when the arrow is fired, the line peels

off freely. Bowfishing line is normally 130-pound test or greater braided line. This heavy weight is necessary due to the force involved as the arrow leaves the bow and the extreme conditions to which the line is subjected. Remember, a bow doesn't have the forgiving flex of a fishing rod.

One of the best innovations to arrive on the bowfishing scene in recent years has been a specially designed bowfishing reel called the AMS Retriever. It consists of a reel mechanism and a line-storing canister. The Retriever can be set to allow the free exit of the line on the shot, but it also has a reel handle that allows for easy line retrieval. As the line is retrieved it is stored inside the reel canister, ready for the next shot.

While bowfishing is a lot of fun there is one extremely important caution. Due to the use of heavy line, if the line became tangled, the arrow could snap back and cause serious injury to the shooter.

That being said, with a few simple precautions, this danger can be avoided. Never attempt to use a conventional fishing reel and line for bowfishing purposes. Use only equipment designed specifically for bowfishing. When using a wrap-on spool reel, care must be taken when wrapping the line on the reel to prevent snags or backlashes. The AMS Retriever system mentioned above is specifically designed to ensure the line will not tangle during retrieval, greatly reducing the possibility of an arrow snapping back towards the shooter.

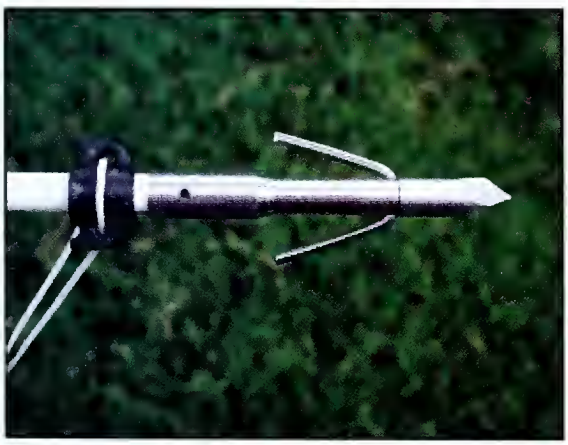
You must possess a valid fishing license to bowfish. Please consult the PA Fish & Boat Commission's regulations on bowfishing and the use of PFDs at www.fish.state.pa.us.

It is critical to always keep the line in front of the bow. If the line gets tangled with any part of the bow, or worse, with the bowstring itself, the arrow could snap back on the shot, causing injury to the shooter. This condition can be easily avoided by NEVER tying the line to the back of the arrow. AMS has developed a safety kit that allows the line to be fastened to a slide, which keeps the line in front of the bow before the shot and then slides back the arrow shaft as the arrow leaves the bow. The slide hits a stop mounted on the rear of the arrow allowing the line to stay in front of the bow before and during the shot, yet trail the arrow's flight after the arrow is released. This feature makes for safe and fun-filled bowfishing. For information on the Retriever Reel and the Safety Slide visit the AMS website at **www.amsbowfishing.com**.

In Pennsylvania bowfishing is permitted for carp, gar, suckers and eels on all commonwealth waters, day or night, except in approved trout waters during the closed season and in special-regulation waters. For additional information check the current fishing regulations to make sure you are in compliance with the latest laws before heading to the water.

For a great way to enjoy the outdoors this summer, and for summers to come, grab your sunglasses and give bowfishing a try. □

A SAFETY SLIDE prevents tangling by keeping the line in front of the bow before the shot, then sliding back the arrow shaft as the arrow leaves the bow.



Sure, it's a reservoir for holding powder, but many powderhorns "say" something about the one who carries it.

Art of the Powderhorn



SOFT TREE CALLS punctuated the predawn stillness. Life was awakening on this Berks County ridge top. Restless silhouettes moved from branch to branch, searching for the optimum landing spot below, and soon the indistinct shapes began to leave the safety of the trees.

Sitting against a toppled oak, I pulled my wingbone turkey call from my pocket. The long bone segments, one attached to the other, had a cow horn bellow glued to the end for sound amplification. Although my first attempts at soft yelps were less than award winning, I was rewarded with a resounding gobble nearby.

The gobbler was but a distant voice, but the engraved gobbler on the end of the bellows, as well as the turkeys on my shot and powderhorns, were like old friends. Engraved powderhorns are like that, they carry the memories of old hunts and an appreciation of that which is hunted.

I called again and the gobbler, along with two others, responded. Birds were now dropping out of the trees like ripe grapes from an overhanging vine. With so many eyes now on the ground and closing in on my position, I didn't want to attempt another call.



SKIP HAMAKER, Reading, is a highly regarded powderhorn artisan and engraver. Flat powderhorns are just as authentic as round horns.

Suddenly, a group of six hens appeared out of the mayapples to my right and made tracks for the log I was hiding against. One jumped up on top of the log and stared right into my camouflaged facemask. She purred and clucked and

intensified her stare as if to say, "What are you and where is the hen I heard calling?"

Three gobblers with tails fanned and wingtips dragging the ground sauntered into the midst of the hens, not 20 yards away. First one gobbled and then the other two. The hens stuck their heads straight up and eyed the toms.

There I sat, afraid to breathe, blink or even think. Give a hunter a chance to make a mistake and they usually do. Have patience, patience, patience, I thought. Suddenly, the turkeys stopped calling and strutting and went into alert. Another hunter, who had heard the gobbling, was approaching. The birds simply melted back into the grapevines and mayapples. My hunt was over. The engraved turkey images on the sides of my horns gave me some solace, and this close encounter of the feathered kind would be added to a book of memories.



ROUND POWDERHORNS are the most common type, but flat horns are popular because they fit inside hunting pouches and fit comfortably on the hip.

The Powderhorn

"I Powder with my Brother ball. . .A Hero like do Conquer All"

The flintlock longrifle is one of the most famous examples of folk art to emerge from the colonial America period, but the engraved powderhorn is a close second. No early American fireplace would be complete without the addition of a cow horn of powder hanging above a leather hunting pouch. They take their place proudly beside the rifle — all necessary components to survival.

Cow horns have been the weatherproof containers of choice for centuries. They took on a specific chore in the 15th century, when musketeers needed a way to store and moisture-proof their blackpowder stores. But cow horn truly rose to prominence in America when its utilitarian nature was elevated to the status of art by engravers. India ink, sometimes even blackpowder ink, was incised into the shell of the horn. Maps, city renderings, animals and owners' names were all inscribed into a rifleman's horn. Crude carvings, important dates, scriptures, poems and verse also ended up on powderhorns. They served as a testament to time and as a tribute.

One bit of verse scrimshawed into a powderhorn in the private collection of Rich Nordi (www.americanpowderhorns.com) states to the ages:

Arouse jolly Bacchus the horn to embrace

It will cheer up the spirits to follow the chase

It will brace up the nerves the game to pursue

And cause the bold huntsman to sound the halloo

Paul "Skip" Hamaker (1309 North 10th Street, Reading, PA 19604; www.skipshorns.com) is a powderhorn builder and a highly regarded engraver. His horns are accurately detailed, round, flat and screw-tipped, for reenactors, rendezvous, muzzleloading competitors and

hunters. They are styled after those from 18th century colonial America. These carved and engraved powderhorns are an art form unto themselves, and Hamaker has recently been recognized nationally for his craftsmanship.

The April 1997 cover of *Muzzle Blasts* magazine featured a Hamaker powderhorn alongside a custom reproduction flintlock, leather pouch and knives. More recently, Skip created a set of engraved powderhorns for the Ned Smith Rifle (Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, Pine and Walnut Streets, Millersburg, PA 17061; 717-692-3699; www.nedsmithcenter.org) that honored this noted American artist's life. Hamaker's horn work is museum quality, as evidenced by his work in the Rockwell Museum in Corning, New York.



THE KEY AREAS of horn art include the carved butt cap, neck spout and engraved body. Each historic period, such as the French and Indian War, Colonial or Golden Age, has specific styles that are identifiable by hornsmiths.

The powderhorn begins as a raw cow horn, hand sanded, boiled and soaked multiple times in onion skins. Hamaker is careful to use the same colonial methods to create the golden hue found on original horns that he studies in museums. Plugs are carved from local hardwoods, and the completed horn is soaked in rapeseed. Once the horn is completed architecturally, Hamaker then adds his specialty touch — engraving. Drawing and scratching into the horn with sewing needles, and then rubbing diluted India ink into the design accomplish this. Hamaker horns have their own unique style, as they not only recreate history, but the engraved designs also can incorporate an owner's personal touches.

On a 1758 replica of one carried by Scottish French and Indian War officer Farquar Emdombbein, Skip engraved "Nemo me impuna lacesit." Translated it means: "No one attacks me with impunity." Embellished with a Scottish coat of arms and a thistle, this period replica will once again see life on the hip of a living historian.

Another member of The Honourable Company of Horners (HCH) and horn engraver of note is Orville "Spark" Mumma (108 Hemlock Hill Lane, Jonestown, PA 17038). Spark specializes in small, flat, scrimshawed priming horns. Four of his powderhorns were recently featured in the movie "Alamo." Billy Bob Thornton, who plays Davy Crockett, carried one of Mumma's bone-tipped southern styled screw-horns in the movie.

Mumma has been a horn maker and horn engraver for nearly three decades. His priming horns run between 2½ and 5 inches. His powder measurers range from 20- to 200-grain capacities. His museum quality powderhorns are much in demand by collectors and hunters.

Hornmakers create more than just powderhorns. Combs, spice horns, belted tool holders and even boxes are crafted from their shells. Powderhorns created the most demand, though, because of three salient features: the scrimshawed surface, the carved and inlaid wooden butt plugs and the attachment staples and projections. In each facet, the artisan can be creative.

Past guildmaster and one of the founders of the HCH, and a noted horn maker in his own right, John C. Proud's (686 Sterling Park, Cortland, NY 13045; jcproud@usadatanet.net.) horns have won blue ribbons and Best of Show honors at Dixon's Gunmaker's Fair, and have appeared in all of the major muzzleloading magazines. Proud is well known for his French and Indian War period engraved horns.

Other featured horn makers include: Roland F. Cradle, villagerestoration@yahoo.com; Lee A. Larkin, PO Box 275, Bedford, PA 15522; Steve Lodding, patentbreech1@earthlink.net; Arthur J. DeCamp, ajdecamp@penn.com; Mark Thomas, mtgraver@juno.com; Mike Small, wbgv@yahoo.com; H. David Wright, hdwright007@comcast.net; Ron Ehlert, flintloc@outdrs.net.

The Metal Flask

The arrival of the fulminating percussion cap changed the face of muzzleloading, but before this period, the metal flask evolved and, despite its short life, it too, has a significant history.

Pockets were fast taking the place of hunting pouches, and coat pockets and flasks seemed to be made for each other. The invention of interchangeable parts and the assembly line made it easy to stamp out the metal halves that were then soldered together into a flask — lots of flasks. They soon became as common as the copper penny. Stores like Tryon of Philadelphia and the Great Western Gun Works of Pittsburgh made it possible to purchase these flasks for a dollar, and the most artistic up to $14.

Flasks were constructed of tin, copper, zinc, brass and German silver (nickel brass) and were decorated with patterns of game, patriotic symbols or hunting scenes embossed in their metal surfaces. They were shiny, colorful and easy to carry, but they weren't around too long because of the advent of the cartridge.

Today, flasks are mostly associated with pistols. Their small size and long pointed spouts make loading the cylinders easier than working with a powderhorn. Unlike the watertight shell of a powder horn, flasks are not nearly as weather resistant.

Never load a rifle directly from a flask, as a glowing spark left behind by the unburned blackpowder carbon could ignite the powder being dumped from the spout of the flask. An ignited half-pound of blackpowder can make a devastating visual statement.

The Future

Each generation seeks a "new and improved version" of hunting gear. The muzzleloader gave way to the breechloader; those early .45-70s gave way to the .30-30 repeating rifles, and they in turn yielded to the semiautomatic. Along that path of progress, however, there is usually a keepsake worthy to pass on. For me, that is the engraved powderhorn. Born of another era, another century, another generation, the venerable cow horn container has risen above the plain and fancy gadgets and gear that were invented to make the hunter more effective. The engraved powderhorn has been elevated to a place given for special folk art. It provides a sense of time, purpose, pride and respect for its owner. We can all take pride in the fact that the engraved powderhorn, like the longrifle that it fed for more than three centuries, evolved in the hands of artisans from right here in Pennsylvania. □

Fun Game answers:

C, O, R, V, I, D, A, E.

CORVIDAE.

Changing of the Guard

IT'S THE CHANGING of the guard outside my window these days, and I'm glad to see spring finally dipping a toe in the cold winter waters, however tentatively it does so in April. After months of dreary monochrome and silence, there's finally some color in the landscape, finally some sound in the air.

The best of the season, to me, are the returning waves of songbirds, an explosion of color and melody — blue-headed vireos and palm warblers, rose-breasted grosbeaks fresh from Colombia, indigo buntings the color of a cloudless July sky. But happy as I am to see them arrive, it's always a little bittersweet in April, when the birds that shared the winter with me slowly filter away.



There's always an ebb and flow to any winter, rhythms that are sometimes predictable and sometimes not. I hang my feeders in late September, and they're mostly ignored except by the house finches. But when the nights turn cold in October, the migrants begin to arrive — the first juncos and white-throated sparrows about the time small game season opens. By early November I usually see some purple finches, the males raspberry among the rose-red house finches, but they're just passing through, along with the handful of pine siskins and fox sparrows that show up then, too, for a few days.

By mid-month, the white-crowned sparrows make an appearance — tall, elegant in their evening-wear caps of black and white. That's when the locals get serious about the handouts, the titmice, downy woodpeckers, nuthatches and cardinals. Most years, around the opening week of deer season, they are joined by the tree sparrows, which to me are the real signal of winter's arrival — these slim, hardy birds that live most of their lives well north of the sub-Arctic treeline, birds who just a week or two earlier may have been foraging among polar bears on the shores of Hudson Bay.

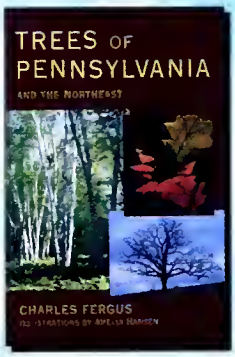
This winter, the feeders were mostly empty through December and early January, the unseasonably warm and open weather making it easy to find natural food. But when the mercury fell well below zero, and the snow and ice finally appeared with a vengeance, my yard was awash in birds made tame by cold and hunger. When I walked outside at daybreak, my breath leaking in smoky tendrils from my nostrils, they moved only a few feet away, into the thickest cover, and the bold, noisy chickadees, which arrived this winter from points north, landed on my head and shoulders as I worked, their wings making the sound of someone riffling a deck of cards.

Those mornings when the thermometer hung somewhere south of minus 10, I ate my breakfast by the kitchen sink, looking out at the constant movement and color — the big red-bellied woodpecker on the suet, 20 or 30 doves walking with their tiny, mincing steps among the strips of cracked corn, goldfinches whose dull, olive plumage was starting to show glints of yellow — a sign that, the weather aside, spring wasn't as far away as it seemed.

Now they're all gone, except for a few straggling juncos and whitethroats, and even they will, in a week or two, be headed back north to the high mountains and Canadian bogs to nest. So while I'll enjoy the colorful birds that will replace them, I have to admit the feeders look awfully lonely these days, and breakfast is going to be a far less interesting meal.

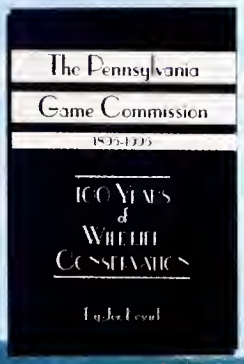
Scott Weidensaul

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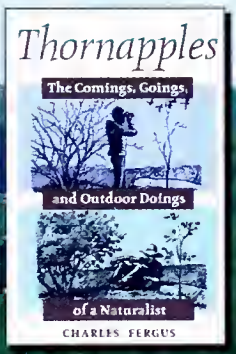


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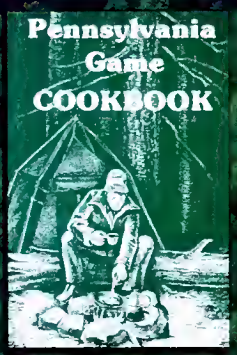




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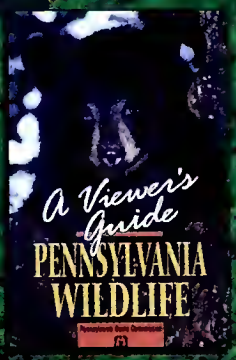


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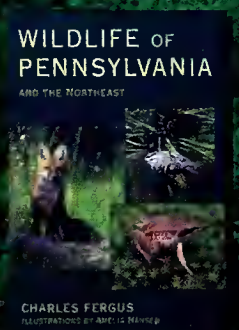
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Hemlock Hare

HEMLOCK HARE, by Patrick Sharbaugh is the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. The snowshoe hare frequents the swampland, overgrown with hemlock, rhododendron, willows and alders common in the Pocono Region of northeastern Pennsylvania. The snowshoe brings a little of the Far North right here to the Keystone State.

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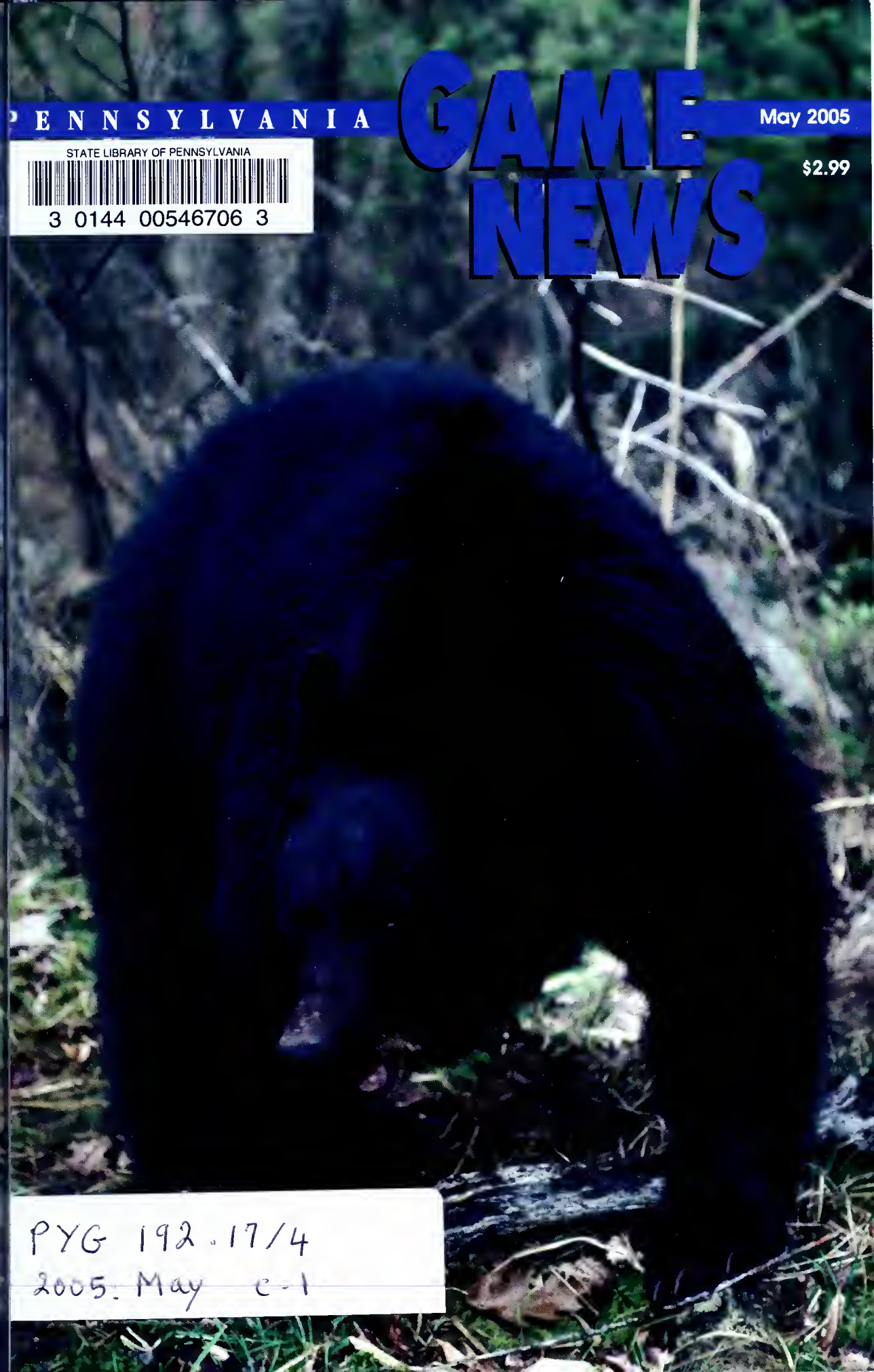
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(Cover story on p. 29)

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editorial

30 Years of Success

WHEN PENNSYLVANIA'S first spring gobbler season began, back in 1968, few people if any could have ever imagined what a success it would become. That first year, the season was only six days long, and although hunting was allowed statewide, birds were largely confined to the mountainous northcentral part of the state. Around 13,000 hunters headed out that spring, and they got around 1,600 birds.

Now, 36 seasons later, turkeys are abundant throughout the state, the spring season is four weeks (five Saturdays) long, nearly a quarter million hunters are heading afield, and 40,000 to 50,000 gobblers are being taken. This is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished when hunters and the Game Commission combine forces for a common cause.

Just five years after that first spring gobbler season here, the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded, and two years later, the Pennsylvania Chapter was formed. This year the Pennsylvania Chapter is celebrating its 30th anniversary, and the group certainly has much to celebrate.

The Pennsylvania Chapter is now made up of 74 local chapters, operating under the banner, "PA NWTF," and enjoys a total membership of more than 22,000. More amazing is what the Pennsylvania chapters have accomplished over the years.

Through the Super Fund program (recently renamed "Hunting Heritage Super Fund") they have raised more than $3.5 million, and spent this money right here, now up to nearly $200,000 a year, creating herbaceous openings, planting trees, buying equipment, and conducting all sorts of other habitat management work, and not just for wild turkeys, but for all wildlife. In 2004 alone, members of PA NWTF conducted 60 Super Fund projects here.

Another reason for the success of both the NWTF and the state chapter is that their work goes beyond turkeys and turkey hunting. "Women in the Outdoors" is a NWTF program designed to help women 14 and older become involved in camping, recreational shooting, fishing, birdwatching, outdoor cooking and much more. JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics and Sportsmanship) is a national and state program to help kids 17 and younger learn all sorts of outdoor skills as well. And "Wheelin' Sportsmen" was established to provide people with disabilities opportunities to participate in, again, not just turkey hunting, but all sorts of outdoor activities.

Members of NWTF can take great pride in all that's been accomplished. Strong leadership, a broad mission, and tremendous grassroots support are the ingredients for not just turkey hunting, but for promoting our great hunting tradition and spreading the word that hunters and shooters represent the cornerstone of wildlife conservation across America.

When you're out this spring and that old boss gobbler sounds off, or you catch sight of a hen slipping through the forest, or just find a turkey track on a muddy forest trail, reflect for a moment on all the hard work that's been going on for decades, by hunters just like you and me, who are making this all possible.

For more on the Pennsylvania Chapter's "30 Years Old and Better Than Ever" celebration, visit www.panwtf.com — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

In the March gun column there was a photo of a Savage 99 along with two pointed cartridges. I have a Marlin lever action and always use round-nose cartridges, because pointed cartridges, when lined up in the magazine tube, might detonate the primer of the cartridge ahead of it.

R. Boughner
Lemoyne

You're right, round-nose cartridges are recommended for firearms with tubular magazines. One advantage to the Savage 99, though, is that its rotary magazine will safely hold pointed cartridges, just like most pump and bolt action rifles.

Editor:

I'm sending in a new *Game News* subscription for myself. My mom, who left us in 2003, had gotten *Game News* ever since I can remember, and she saved every one of them, so I have quite a collection. With this subscription, I'm continuing the tradition.

D. Poorman
Huntingdon

Editor:

I've been hunting, as a nonresident, for 25 years. Recently, I was in Erie County and happened to see WCO Larry Smith in a parking lot. I asked him a few questions about the past deer season, and I must tell you, the Game Commission should be very proud of its law enforcement officers if they represent the agency like WCO Smith does. He not only took the time to talk with me, he also took a genuine interest in my concerns and questions, and he pointed out things from a management perspective that I would never have thought of from my perspective as a hunter. I may not agree with all the Game Commission's goals, but my hat is off to Larry Smith for being such a fine officer and gentleman.

M. Gerring
Dewittville, NY

Editor:

In regards to the backlash against the Game Commission's deer management plan, it seems to me that too many want everything handed to them with as little effort on their part as possible.

It's not uncommon to see hunters within eyesight of their vehicles or charging through the woods on fully outfitted ATVs. I think the efforts to balance the deer herd with changing habitat are to be applauded and should continue, even if it means all sportsmen have to put in a little effort.

J. Herceg
Blairsville

Editor:

After filling out my deer hunter survey, I went on to read in the March issue that deer hunting seasons and regulations will remain much the same. I'll tell you, hunting three, four or five days to see only a couple deer isn't my idea of fun, and I've heard the same complaint from many of my colleagues. I've hunted over 50 years, and this past season was the worst I've ever experienced as far as seeing deer goes.

I'll admit, probably around more populated areas, deer need to be thinned out, but not every area.

A. Miller
Northeast

Editor:

The article in the March issue did a great job of recreating the history of moose, bison and elk here, but the value of the story was seriously undermined by a factual error in the last sentence ". . . but no other species is likely to face the same fate." I can only assume the author meant to say that no other *game* species. Fact is, hundreds of species in Pennsylvania are facing the risk of extinction.

M. Stanley
Bedford

You're right, when plants, invertebrates and other organisms are included, many species are imperilled here. But in the context of what the author wrote, he specifically mentioned "wildlife," and went on to bring up the fact that no species is likely to become extinct or extirpated because of hunting or trapping, which is true not just in Pennsylvania, but across the country.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.


M. GIRIO BRUMMETT

The Gravel Pit Jake

By Dr. Robert J. Kopanic, Jr.

IT WAS THE Wednesday of the third week of the 2001 spring gobbler season, and I was awake at 3 a.m., to catch my flight from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Erie. As my plane approached the runway in Erie I gazed out at the spring greenery of the rolling northwest Pennsylvania countryside, smiling because I knew that for the next three days I'd be hunting gobblers and fishing for trout in some of the most beautiful and productive country Pennsylvania has to offer.

Coming back home to Warren County always makes me feel wonderful, even more so when friends and hunting or fishing are involved. I currently reside in southeastern Wisconsin, and although we have our share of hunting opportunities, they don't match up to what Pennsylvania has to offer. I had been anxiously awaiting this trip ever since Rick and I made arrangements back in early February. Rick and I have been friends for 30 years — since the age of five — but we hadn't had a chance to hunt together since the 1999 muzzleloader season. Rick's job allows him to do quite a bit of scouting and meeting people, so he had several places lined up for us to try. Although Rick and I have shared many memorable hunts, neither of us had ever bagged a spring gobbler.

Rick picked me up at the airport for the hour drive over to Youngsville where he, his wife and three children live. The first words out of his mouth were, "Oh, Robert, there are some nice birds around and they're just hammerin'. I could hardly contain myself; the anticipation was killing me. It was only 3 p.m. when we arrived at Rick's house, but I was anxious for the evening to pass so we could go to sleep and then get up to hunt. The afternoon, though, was hardly uneventful, as we shared strategies, past hunting stories, caught up with what was happening in our lives and, most of all, demonstrated our newly learned expertise with our diaphragm calls.

Right before dark we went out to one of Rick's spots to see if we could "put one to sleep," but the wind kicked up and it even started to rain. We didn't hear any birds, but my spirits weren't dampened. I knew we were in the middle of the season, in an area where turkeys were around. We planned to come back to this spot in the morning, but when we got back to Rick's home his wife told us that Rick's buddy, Rich, had called. "He sounded excited, you better call him back," Erica exclaimed.

Rick called Rich and found out that he had heard some birds at a place called the gravel pit and was wondering if we wanted to try there in the morning. Although Rich hadn't killed his bird yet, he is an accomplished turkey hunter with dozens of gobblers under his belt,

either bagged himself or called in for others. Because Rick and I are just beginners, we decided to take Rich up on his offer. This was a change in plans, but changing plans and flexibility is what turkey hunting is all about.

Surprisingly, despite all the excitement and visions of longbeards dancing around in my turkey hunting crazed head, I was able to fall asleep that night. Before I knew it, 4 a.m. rolled around. It's great to wake up that early in the morning; it makes me feel like I'm surprising the night and beating the morning to the punch.

We walked outside to load the truck and discovered that it was extremely humid. Clearly, a front was moving in, and we hoped the turkeys would be active.

We met Rich at the local coffee stop where Jimmy, the owner, had already opened to brew fresh coffee and make his delicious egg, ham and cheese sandwiches. With a quick introduction and several words of encouragement we were on our way, headed a few miles down the road to the gravel pit.

When we arrived Rich informed us that we had a 200-yard walk to where we would listen for birds. As I pulled on my turkey vest and uncased my gun Rich motioned to the hill behind him. "Did you guys hear that? They're already gobbling up there and I think they are close." We gently closed the truck doors and stood there for a second, and sure enough, not one, not two, but three distinct gobblers sounded off, one right after the other. Rich took a giant swig from his coffee cup, set it on the tailgate and said, "Lets go, it's getting late."

We followed Rich single file up the trail, while the toms were still gobbling steadily. The walk was level, and because of the wet ground we were able to move silently. When we came to a small opening Rich said, "This is it. We'll set up right here."

Ricky protested. "This is the bottom of the hill, and the turkeys are up there. Isn't it true that you can't call a gobbler downhill?"

"I know, I've read it many times myself, but the truth is, more than 75 percent of the birds I've killed were coming downhill to my calls," Rich replied.

Having limited experience, Rick and I agreed to go along with Rich's plan. The hen decoy was placed about 20 yards out in front of me. We each found a tree and positioned ourselves about 15 yards apart, with Rick to my left and Rich to my right. We removed our fluorescent orange and hunkered down against our trees. The moment I hit the ground I knew I had forgotten something. In the excitement I had forgotten to put my foam seat pad on my belt. Now I would have to suffer, as water from the wet leaves began to soak through my pants, and there were at least two tree knots the size of golf balls digging into my back. Two words of advice for the beginning turkey hunter: Buy a seat cushion and, more importantly, make sure you bring it

with you.

"I think that at least two of those birds are jakes," Rich said. "If they stop calling, everyone just sit tight. They might come in silent, especially if they think that the boss tom I've been hearing is around."

We all agreed that Rich would do the calling and we would not move until he instructed us to do so.

We settled in and I began tuning in to all the little sounds that you usually don't notice when you are moving in the woods.

I closed my eyes for just a second, thanking God for this glorious day and for blessing me with such wonderful companions to hunt with.

The toms were still steadily gobbling. One would sound off to my far left and then the others would follow in order, one right after the other. I figured they were maybe 300 yards from us, but then another bird gobbled from the opposite direction, and he sounded the closest. His gobble was deeper than the others, too, so I figured he might be the boss.

Well, by this point my pants were completely soaked, and between the knots in the tree and a big rock I had sat on, I was quite uncomfortable, save for the fact that the birds kept on talking. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, Rich imitated a hen flying down off the roost by using his hat to beat the leaves around him. He then scratched the ground with a stick and let out a few soft clucks. Those clucks were music to the toms, as they all gobbled immediately. Three of the four birds sounded like they were still in the tree, but the old boss seemed to be on the move. We didn't hear him come down, but now each time he gobbled he sounded like he was in a different place. Every so often Rich would give a few soft yelps, and each time at least one of the birds would answer.

This went on for a few more minutes and then things got quiet. The three most distant birds no longer answered, and we hadn't heard the other tom either. I was beginning to think that they had joined some hens, although we didn't hear any, or that they were simply becoming disinterested in our calling.

Nevertheless, I had my gun up and ready because I remembered what Rich had said earlier about gobblers coming in silent. Rich seemed to be getting a little frustrated and didn't want all of the birds to lose interest, so he started to do some cutting on his diaphragm call.

Cutting is one of those calls that you don't necessarily need, and one that not everyone can even produce properly on a diaphragm call, but everyone wants to be able to cutt because all the pro turkey callers talk about doing it. Cutting is supposed to mimic the sound of an agitated turkey, and has been reported to bring in birds when other calls fail. Rich started a sharp staccato cutt and then paused. Nothing was happening. He called again about two minutes later, and from what seemed like out of thin air, in the early morning mist, a turkey literally came running down the hill towards me.

My eyes caught the movement about 25 yards out and the bird was closing fast. No fanning, no strutting, no calling and certainly no wasted time coming down the hill. If

the bird kept up this pace it would run right past the decoy, and at this point I couldn't even tell if the charging turkey was a gobbler or hen.

The bird disappeared for a split second and I got my gun up. The turkey came to a screeching halt and whipped around to its left (my right). It had spotted the decoy directly out in front of me, and it was then that I realized the bird was a very rain-soaked jake. He then took a few steps toward the decoy and I clicked off the safety and drew a bead. I would have a clear shot all the way up to the decoy, but didn't want to shoot in case other birds were coming in or in case Rick, who was off to my left, was going to take a crack at it, as he was closer.

I relaxed and kept my eyes open and two seconds later — *boom*! Rick's Remington 870 shattered the early morning silence. He dropped the bird 20 yards out in front of me. Holy smokes, we got a turkey!

We gathered around the bird, each one of us grinning from ear to ear. Rich gave us the play-by-play of how the birds shut up and then how his cutting was too much for the jakes to take, without coming in silent, of course, for a look. Handshakes were exchanged, and after photos the three of us just stood there beaming for a few moments, savoring the thrill of a successful hunt.

"Well, we finally got one, Bobby," Rick said. "I was waiting for you to shoot."

"I was going to cover you in case you missed," I said.

"Not a chance of that," Rick replied.

"Okay, you two, it's only 6:30, still prime time. Let's see if we can't get another one going," Rich chimed in.

I closed my eyes for just a second, thanking God for this glorious day and for blessing me with such wonderful companions to hunt with.

Spring turkey season will always be one of my favorite times of the year. It's just a great time to be alive, I thought, as I made my plane reservations to return to Pennsylvania for the next year's spring gobbler season. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

A Guide to Hunting Pennsylvania Turkeys, by Tom Fegely, B&T Outdoor Enterprises, P.O. Box 986, Cherryville, PA 18035 (www.fegelyoutdoors.com) 312 pp., softcover, $16.95 (PA residents add 6% state sales tax), $4 s&h for first book, $2 for each additional book. An accomplished writer, photographer and radio and TV personality, Tom Fegely is well known throughout the state. In this book, with 11 sections, 41 chapters and more than 250 photos, Tom covers every facet of turkey hunting, from history and biology, techniques and equipment, where to go, safety and ethics, and much more. Adding tremendously to the expertise presented here are the opinions and experiences of other turkey hunting experts, more than 50 in all. Under the banner of "Another View" Denny Gulvus provides tips on videotaping turkeys; there's Harry Boyer's "Let the Turkeys Hunt You;" Matt Morett offers advice on using locator calls, as does Dale Rohm on caring for box calls; Don Heckman discusses how to make sure your shot connects; Bedford County WCO Tim Flanigan gives his perspective on hunter safety; and PGC biologist Mary Jo Casalena discusses what the future is likely to hold. A seasoned caller or new to the sport, you're sure to get a great deal from *Hunting Pennsylvania Turkeys*.

A Hunter's Book of Days

By Chuck Fergus

THE PEAK of the fall colors seems to be about two weeks late this year. It's October 25, a cool day, cloudy with a drizzling rain and the kind of subdued, general light that shows off to its best advantage the autumnal brilliance of the eastern woods.

Sassafras trees are salmon, gold, banana-yellow — all of those colors on the same tree, sometimes on the same branch. Red maples sport leaves that are gold on their undersides and orange on their upper surfaces; the leaves nod gently as the water drips off them. Dogwoods are the rich red of burgundy wine, and the oaks have finally begun to take on their slow, long-lasting bronze.

I smell the minty odor of pennyroyal crushed beneath my boots and apples lying in sweet rot beneath an old tree with a precarious slant to its trunk. If I were a grouse, I'd be after those windfalls — or at least I'd be hanging around nearby.



Bob D'Angelo



My springer Caillie leads the way into the brushy woods. We

FINE HUNTING partners, such as Carl here, double-barreled shotguns, blue-skied autumn days and woodcock/grouse coverts (and not necessarily in that order) are to be remembered and cherished over a lifetime, no matter where one travels to.



Bob D'Angelo

hunt past clumps of multiflora spangled with bright red rosehips. Past the equally vivid scarlet fruits of barberry. There's food aplenty in this covert: it remains for us to find the birds that ought to have been drawn here by the provender.

A band of robins interrupts its foraging to scold us; the birds' ruddy breasts seem pale compared to the colorful foliage. At my feet, what appears to be a shrew goes dashing along through the leaf litter. The critter is a quick brown blur that vanishes beneath the leaves, only to reappear momentarily at the base of a fallen branch and then to dive out of sight again, like a half-formed thought that the mind cannot quite apprehend.

We proceed along the mountain bench, past witch hazels laden with nutlets and with pale yellow thread-like flowers. Grapevines dangle their clustered ice-blue fruits, triangular beechnuts lie scattered on the ground — good grouse foods all. We work our way uphill between fallen oaks and more tangles of grapevine and big clumps of greenbrier. Caillie checks out all of those potential grouse hideouts. Nothing. Higher up on the mountain we turn and hunt back along the slope above the bench, through equally attractive cover.

An hour later, and we still haven't flushed a grouse. I call Caillie in. I squat down on my hams and support myself by resting the shotgun's buttstock on the ground. It makes me cross, and a bit edgy, worrying that it will be another poor year. For six years in a row, grouse numbers have been depressed in central Pennsylvania. In the 1980s and early 1990s, I could be confident of flushing 20 to 30 birds in a day's hunting. On some occasions Jenny and I put up more than 35. I would get shooting at five, maybe ten, and often I would come home with a bird and sometimes with my limit of two weighing down the game pouch.

Then in 1996, things fell apart.

That spring, a week of cold rain settled in around the time when the grouse chicks should have been pipping their shells. It was so raw that I kept a fire in the woodstove in the middle of May, when usually the last fire is in April.

Insects are an important source of protein for developing grouse chicks, and perhaps the weather was sufficiently cold and damp that the insects did not hatch out or were inactive during that crucial period. Then later in the month it got cold again and rained for another long spell. Maybe the young birds that had survived the first bout of bad weather were now a bit too large, so that their mothers could not cover them up when brooding them, could not keep them warm and dry. However it may have happened, the grouse population plummeted.

Next year brought another cold, dreary

spring. In the fall, I found almost no grouse. I shot some woodcock and a few pheasants, mainly for the enjoyment of my old spaniel Jenny and for the edification of my young dog Caillie. By then, Jenny was nine years old and had started to slow down. Caillie was a youngster, and it was time to get her started on her life's work. But with the grouse so few, we missed some important lessons.

Our 150-year-old farmhouse has a beautiful timber frame of handhewn spruce beams, which we exposed during the remodeling process. It's a nice, tight house, which I heated last year on only three cords of wood (the temperature hit an astonishing 30 below zero on some nights). I have flushed woodcock and grouse in the old fields on our farm, and I've met fellow grouse and woodcock hunters generous enough to show me a bunch of new coverts. My wife, Nancy Brown, and I are both working as freelance writers. Will, age 16, has made new friends and is thriving at the Lyndon Institute — where, as chance would have it, the headmaster, Rick Hilton, is a transplanted Pennsylvanian with three Brittanies and a fondness for double-barreled shotguns.

I stand up, look about, and tell Caillie to heel.

As I said, I'm edgy now, as I scan the cover out in front — edgy, because I really want to find grouse. I want to find grouse because there is no other sort of hunting as thrilling and challenging as the pursuit of those wild and cagey birds. I want to find grouse so that Caillie can work out how to handle them: at age six, she has never enjoyed a season with abundant birds, a season when she can make mistakes, learn from her missteps, and arrive at an understanding of how to effectively find and flush grouse.

I want to find grouse — I want there to be birds in my coverts — because this could be my last autumn in Pennsylvania. During the past summer, Nancy and I bought a farm in New England. We had considered leaving Centre County for several years, because of the new highways that were under construction or were being planned, the ever-increasing traffic, the housing developments and big box stores popping up on every hand.

For several years we'd been looking for land. We came close to buying a 90-acre parcel in northern Pennsylvania, but the deal fell

Bob D'Angelo



through when the sellers leased the mineral rights to a gas company. We thought hard about a farm on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, from which you could see emerald pastures and forested mountains and the ocean's distant glint. But Cape Breton seemed a world removed from Pennsylvania and the friends we had made there over the decades.

On a rainy day in June, in northern Vermont, Nancy hiked up a hill ("There's a beautiful view in that direction," the realtor had said, pointing from inside her car, "but you can't see it just now."), looked around at the undulating land, the mix of hardwood and softwood trees, the hayfields and the potential horse pastures, and said to me, "If you want to move, this is the place." The landscape was beautiful and inviting, and the area reminded me of Centre County 30 years in the past. But I looked at the ramshackle farmhouse, grimaced, and shook my head. Nancy talked me into coming back the next day. Under a blue sky and a bright sun, the house didn't look so impossible. And that view to the north really was grand: sharp mountains and a deep glacier-cut gap. Before heading back to Pennsylvania, we made an offer on the property. A month later, we owned 108 acres, the house, a big garage, and a machine shed that could be expanded into a horse barn.

At the time, we didn't know when we would be moving. There was an outside chance that we would relocate soon, perhaps as early as next summer, depending on what we decided to do with the farmhouse, and depending on whether we felt we could sell our current house — I had built it myself 20 years earlier. Would Will, our 14-year-old son, want to move? When looking at the property in Vermont, we also visited the school serving the local area. It was a beautiful brick academy in the best New England tradition. But Will had roots in Pennsylvania, just as we did. He had friends he didn't want to leave. And he was starting his freshman year at the high school in Bald Eagle Valley.

So everything is up in the air. We don't know where we'll be a year from now. But one thing at least is certain: It's bird season in the central Pennsylvania uplands, I've got a shotgun in my hands and a spaniel straining to hunt, and I want to find a grouse.

I release Caillie, and we hunt onward through the misty, brushy woods. Using a combination of soft whistle notes and hand signals, I direct her to a grape-festooned blowdown, from which I fully expect her to root a bird out. I post myself on the edge of the tangle, my legs spread slightly apart, ready to shift my weight in one direction or another and to point the gun in whichever direction our quarry decides to fly. But Caillie sniffs her way through the grape tangle, slips out on the far side, and keeps going.

The rain steps up. The trees' branches wave in the breeze, and yellow leaves go sideslipping down. We make another pass, a hundred yards higher up on the mountain. An hour later, as I walk out of the brush without once having raised my gun, it occurs to me that this could be the last time I hunt this covert. □

This article is adapted from my new book, *A Hunter's Book of Days*, published by Countrysport Press. The book is organized around hunts I made during my last bird season in Pennsylvania, and it also includes reminiscences about hunts for grouse, woodcock and pheasant made during previous years. The book can be purchased directly from the publisher (**www.countrysportpress.com**, phone 800-685-7962) and from online booksellers. For an autographed copy, send a check for $32 (cost of the book, plus priority shipping) to Charles Fergus, 276 Jones Rd., East Burke VT 05832.

A few drops of blood on some dry leaves. It wasn't much, but it had to do if I was going to build a case against the poachers of the ...

Cinnamon Bear at Crooked Pines

By William M. Williams

Sullivan County WCO

THE THIRD DAY of the '03 bear season found me in my office, typing citations, processing evidence and making phone calls. Bear season was winding down, with only a fraction of the hunters still in the woods. For those remaining, though, it was one last opportunity to take a bruin before Thanksgiving. I replayed the events of the past two days in my mind. This bear season would be memorable, but it wasn't over yet.

On the opener, my deputies and I were waiting with two other WCOs on Dutch Mountain. We had reason to believe that a group of hunters would be setting up in five treestands baited with piles of corn and apples.

Baiting bears is not taken lightly. Bears can easily become accustomed



to food placed out for them, and their daily visits to baited sites become predictable. Shooting a bear in such a situation is against the law, of course, and an affront to the concept of "fair chase," like shooting the proverbial fish in the barrel.

At first light a check of the stands produced only two hunters, each surprised to see a WCO underneath his perch. The two were issued citations and escorted from the area. I thanked my fellow officers for their assistance, a little embarrassed at requesting the "overkill" in personnel.

From there, the long opening day spent patrolling turned into a long opening night at the Hillsgrove Ranger Station, where bears were being processed. The check station was crowded, as 2003 was a banner year for bears. For a WCO in Sullivan County, the opening day of bear season is at least 16 hours.

The second day of the season was a little more eventful. Deputies Frank Miller, Mark Forwood and I stopped at the Hillsgrove Ranger Station early that afternoon. A baited stand we had checked on the opening day and earlier that morning hadn't been occupied, and we surmised that it might have been set up for the upcoming deer season. A steady stream of vehicles was now bringing bears in to be processed. Two hunters arrived and backed their truck up under the scales with a pair of bears weighing around 200 pounds apiece.

Frank asked one of the excited hunters where they had taken the bears. To Frank's surprise, the hunter indicated that both had been taken in the same area we had under surveillance for baiting. I asked the other hunter about where the bears had been taken, and his answer provided me with sufficient evidence to seize the bears and initiate an investigation.

We met both hunters at their camp, were shown the entrails and where each was positioned when they fired. A light dusting of snow the night before helped our investigation tremendously. Both of these bears had been drawn into shooting range by cracked corn, apples and scraps from camp meals. Evidence of the bait was collected, photographs were taken and measurements at the scene were made. The bears were seized, tagged and taken to the Northeast Region Office. By the time Frank and I arrived back in Sullivan County, it was well into the evening.

The next morning the region office dispatcher called with information about a large male cinnamon phase bear being shot over a bait pile near the Bradford County line. We even had the name of the suspect. The hunter had the bear processed in Hillsgrove earlier that day. After picking up Deputy Miller, we stopped at the check station. We learned that a cinnamon phase bear weighing 380 pounds had been brought in by a guy named Randy Johnson, who had been hunting out of the Crooked Pines Camp in Fox Township. The report on the bear indicated it had not been field-dressed. Its coloration made this bruin quite unusual; only two to three percent of Pennsylvania's bears have this genetic cinnamon phase anomaly.

Frank and I said nothing as we made our way to the northeastern end of

Sullivan County. We were pondering the many variables of the situation. Was the information accurate? Would we find the bait and the kill site? Had the suspect left the county?

Beginning our search near some landmarks provided by the informant, we soon spotted a wooden sign with the name "Crooked Pines." Pulling into the drive and discovering four trucks parked outside of a rustic cabin, we started to feel optimistic that our suspect hadn't left. Frank walked over to a white Dodge truck, peered into the bed and then waved me over. A bear with a remarkable dark rust-color coat lay in the bed. Its large shoulders gave it an almost grizzly bear-like appearance.

When Johnson began wondering if he could find either of those two locations, Frank and I knew something was up, but the trick would be in proving it.

We knocked on the door. "State officers. We're looking for Randy Johnson," I announced. A figure finally appeared in the shadow behind the screen door. The man was tall and lanky with a scruffy beard, long brown hair and chiseled facial features.

"I'm Randy Johnson," the man said, his voice cracking with apprehension. "What do you want?" I explained that we were checking out information about the bear he had shot. After checking Johnson's ID, Frank and I asked him about his bear. He explained that he had killed it "way up on the mountain," pointing past a Boy Scout camp and into the interior of SGL 12. I then asked him to show me the kill site and where the bear had been loaded into the truck. When Johnson began wondering if he could find either of those two locations, Frank and I knew something was up, but the trick would be in proving it.

We secured identification from three other men in the cabin, and our suspect reluctantly agreed to try to find the kill site.

The quickly assembled plan was to have Frank wait near the cabin while Johnson and his hunting partner, Tom, joined me in the hike to the site. Frank and I were to maintain constant radio communication in case something went wrong. The truck with Johnson and Tom pulled out of the driveway and made a left on the township road as I followed close behind. There was no doubt in my mind that this was going to be a wild goose chase. If there was a bait pile, it would be behind the cabin, along with the other evidence we needed. This initial exercise was just a matter of giving them enough "rope." And these two were reeling it right in.

The vehicle made a right turn onto a dirt road leading into Boy Scout camp property, only a few hundred yards away from Crooked Pines. Johnson and Tom came to a stop at the base of an incline. Johnson walked back to my truck and nervously informed me that they were not allowed to drive any farther up this road, even though (according to them) they had earlier. "You are today," I said. "Keep going." The duo drove a few hundred yards to the far end of a grassy field, then the three of us assembled to review the suspect's story. "The bear was running toward the swamp," Johnson began, while

motioning his arm from left to right. "I fired two shots and the bear dropped down there." His story of the bear being shot "way up on the mountain" was now contradictory. Plus, the distance between where the three of us stood was only a "drive and a pitching wedge" back to the cabin.

I then asked Johnson to point out the exact spot where the bear was lifted onto the truck. He gestured to a general area on the ground that was conspicuously free of any tire marks or the swath one would expect from a bear weighing nearly 400 pounds being dragged across the ground. When I commented on the lack of any drag marks, Tom offered, "we carried it out."

I tried to imagine two men carrying a bear that size out of the woods. It was inconceivable. There was clearly no evidence of a vehicle or dead bear recently being in this area. Now that I knew what didn't happen, it was time to find out what did. "Let's head back to the cabin, guys. I've seen enough here," I said.

Back at Crooked Pines, I asked Johnson to show me the area behind the cabin. As Frank and I turned the corner, evidence of baiting became glaringly evident. Large piles of corn and sunflower seeds lay on the bare ground in the small yard. Suet blocks and leftover mesh suet bags were strewn about. Discarded meat and other leftover food items were also evident. It's a start, I thought. What we needed, though, was something to connect the bait in the yard with the bear in the back of that Dodge, and a bear that had not been field-dressed at that.

While Johnson stood by, Frank and I began to search for evidence. Tire tracks in the area suggested a truck had been driven behind the cabin recently, but the tire impressions were relatively weak. After several desperate minutes of looking, our hope was beginning to wane. It would be hard to prove a case of someone killing this bear illegally with what little evidence we had so far. Finally, though, I noticed something not quite right.

Near the far corner of the cabin some saplings appeared to be bent over. Upon further inspection, it became increasingly clear that a truck had backed up over the small trees and continued into the sparse woods. A short distance into the woods the trail ended at an area where the leaves had been disturbed. As I knelt down to inspect the ground at the end of this swath my pulse quickened. There it was: a few drops of blood on some dry leaves. "Hey, Frank, over here."

Frank retrieved the evidence kit from the truck. After donning latex gloves, we began processing the trace amount of blood and other evidence, placing it into bags, then carefully labeling the contents. While bagging the evidence, I turned to Johnson, who was watching nearby, and said, "Kind of tells a story, doesn't it?" Johnson shrugged his



shoulders and stared at his boots.

I instructed everyone to head over to the Hillsgrove Ranger Station. While seated in the conference room, Johnson was presented with the blood samples collected and bait evidence. Informed of the charges that would be filed against him, he was given the opportunity to come clean, but he stood by his original story. He was also informed that all present at the cabin could be charged with possession of an illegally taken bear.

I suggested that the evidence was clear: The bear was drawn in behind the cabin by the bait and shot from a cabin window, probably at night. It ran a few yards into the woods and died. A pickup was then backed up to the bear and it was loaded into the bed. The truck damaged the saplings. The few drops of blood found at the site would be matched with DNA samples from the bear, and I'd bet the barn on it that they'd match. Johnson just stared and asked if that was all. "It is for now," I said.

Evidence collected from the bear included hair, blood and tissue samples, as well as a sample of the stomach contents. Not surprisingly, the stomach contents consisted largely of partially digested corn and sunflower seeds. The cinnamon bear was stretched across the rack of the state vehicle as Frank and I meandered down Red Rock Mountain toward Dallas. I was confident that the evidence, combined with the defendant's contradictory statements, would be sufficient to successfully prosecute the case. The blood and tissue evidence would eventually have to be sent to the USFWS Forensics Laboratory in Oregon, for DNA analysis. It could be as long as a year before the results were returned and the case went to trial. If found guilty, the defendant would pay the cost of all laboratory tests, as well as costs associated with having an expert witness fly out from Oregon to testify. We were looking at another long night, but we were satisfied on how the case was progressing.

Citations were filed on Johnson at the District Justice Office in LaPorte. He was charged with hunting in an area where bait was used as an enticement for wildlife and being in possession of a bear that had been unlawfully taken.

A few days later I received a message from the Dallas office to call Johnson. He wanted to plead guilty to both charges. On the phone he gave me the real rendition on how the events unfolded. It seems that the bear was heading into the baited area and he shot it from the cabin. A truck was backed across some saplings to where the bear had died and the tailgate dropped. It was then loaded into the bed of the truck and taken to Hillsgrove. No surprise there.

The following week Johnson pled guilty to both charges. Fines exceeded $1,000 and he lost his privilege to hunt in Pennsylvania for three years. It was later determined that the bear was the largest cinnamon phase black bear killed in here during the '03 season. The bear was subsequently donated to Worlds End State Park in Sullivan County, where a full body mount will be displayed at the Visitors Center. □



25 Years in the Works

By Lori D Richardson
PGC Education Specialist











WHAT DO ospreys and otters have in common? To start with, they were two of the first wildlife species tobenefit from the Game Commission's Working Together for Wildlife program. But, if you're a Working Together for Wildlife (WTFW) patch collector, you know there's more to it than that.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of WTFW. Carl Graybill, Director of the PGC's Information and Education Bureau was part of the program's initiation. He remembers, "The program was developed to give the public a way to contribute to wildlife; a way for hunters and nonhunters alike to work with the agency to help wildlife."

In 1982 the commission developed a 4-inch, circular, embroidered patch featuring an osprey and the words *Working Together for Wildlife - Pennsylvania Game Commission.* For a $2 donation, a person could obtain the patch and some information on the osprey reintroduction project. A decal of the same size and design could be purchased for $1. The limited edition of 10,000 patches sold out in less than a year.

Ospreys
In 1979 the osprey was listed as extirpated in Pennsylvania. The reintroduction of 265 nestlings obtained from Chesapeake Bay nests between 1980 and 1996 was possible due to WTFW funds. Today more than 40 pairs have established nests in the commonwealth, and the osprey has been reclassified from endangered to threatened.

The WTFW series alternates each year between bird and mammal species. In 1983 the second patch of the series featured a river otter. This time the program expanded to include, not only patches and decals, but also the first in a series of limited edition fine art prints done by renowned nature artist Ned Smith. Decals were available for two more years, until 1986's kestrel, but fine art prints continue to be released each year, complementing the new patch.

"The WTFW program is the foundation for all other or-

Otters
Pennsylvania otters have been protected from hunting and trapping since 1952. Restocking efforts partly funded by WTFW started in the early 80s with the last reintroductions occurring in the mid-90s. Otters can now be found in every major river basin in the state. Trap and transfer of otters from northeastern counties to the Juniata river drainage are still taking place.

ganizations with collectible patches and is possibly the first in the country to benefit wildlife. It is the oldest and strongest collectible wildlife patch series we know of," states Graybill.





Artist Nick Rosato designed the patches until 2005, when Bob Sopchick took over. Older patches have higher values than any other collectible patch series on the secondary market, with some having values of several hundred dollars and the whole series going for more than $1,000.

Due to their high value and collectibility, counterfeit patches have surfaced in the secondary market. Some of the fakes are very good — nearly impossible to tell from the real thing — so be sure to buy from reputable collectors and dealers. Originals can be purchased through the agency's website, at all PGC offices. Patches are currently available from 1999 through 2005.



The WTFW fine art prints offer years of viewing pleasure and also help wildlife. Ned Smith produced the artwork for the first three prints: "*River Otters*," "*Dutch Country Bluebirds*" and "*Big Woods Bobcat*." Ned passed away in 1985, and since then, WTFW fine art print artists have been determined through an annual competition open only to Pennsylvania artists.



The prints are limited to a run of 600 (plus 50 artist's proofs and 30 conservation editions) and some have appreciated considerably over time. The most valuable are the Ned Smith prints, originally purchased for $125, now going for anywhere from $1,000 to $7,000. Many of the other prints have sold out, too. Stephen Leed's "*Winter Birds*," in 1994, sold out in less than three months.



Bald eagles
In 1980 there were only three nesting pairs of eagles in the state. From 1997 to 1999 the nesting population doubled, from 20 to 43 pairs. Now, eagles are nesting in at least 26 counties, 11 new nests were found last year creating a record of 79 nesting pairs. This remarkable recovery is due to the project in which 88 eaglets transplanted here from Saskatchewan. Based on this recovery, bald eagles may soon be reclassified from endangered to threatened.



Other WTFW initiatives de-





Fishers
Once widely distributed in Pennsylvania forests, fishers were virtually extirpated from the state by unregulated trapping and timber cutting in the 1800s. From 1994 through 1998, fishers from New York and New Hampshire were reintroduced to the state's northern forests. Since 2000, annual sightings have been increasing and fishers have been reported in all but 25 counties.

signed to encourage more people to help wildlife include Plantings for Wildlife, Wildlife Seed Mix and bluebird box kits. For roughly 20 years, Planting for Wildlife offered seedling of five tree and shrub species good food and cover for wildlife. A Wildlife Seed Mix for creating food plots was sold until 2004, and bluebird box kits continue to be sold annually.

Now, to satisfy the patch connoisseurs out there and bring us to the 25-year anniversary, I must mention flying squirrels and cardinals. In 1980 the Game Commission created a patch featuring a flying squirrel and the words *WE NEED WILDLIFE*. A $5 contribution got you the patch, a decal of the same size and design, and some information on the need for nongame wildlife contributions, all in a special 3-pocket folder.



Though the flying squirrel arrived two years before the first patch displaing the words *Working Together for Wildlife*, some collectors view it as the "first" patch in the series and, indeed, the flying squirrel was the public's first opportunity to contribute this way in support of wildlife.



In the '90s two patches featuring the words *WE NEED WILDLIFE* replaced the flying squirrel: a male cardinal and, several years later, a female cardinal. The words *Pennsylvania Game Commission* were not included on the original male cardinal patch, but were added later. As a "heads-up" to dedicated collectors, a male and female pileated woodpecker are "in the wings" to succeed the cardinals.





So, what else do ospreys and

Peregrines
Prior to reintroduction efforts starting in 1982, funded in part by WTFW, there were no nesting peregrines in the state. Today, a dozen pairs are nesting here. The goal is to restore peregrine populations at suitable historic cliff nesting sites along major rivers and enhance nesting success on buildings and bridges. Last year, the first cliff-nesting site since the 1960s was found near Williamsport. Beginning in 2002, a satellite telemetry project has enabled the public to follow wandering falcons fledged from nests in both Harrisburg and Pittsburgh through journals and maps on the agency's website.

In the Works

Wildlife currently benefiting from WTFW funding: The *Henslow's sparrow* is endangered or threatened in most states where it lives; in Pennsylvania, the species is most commonly found on grassland areas of reclaimed mines. Recent colonial bird surveys are providing an early warning that the state's largest rookery for both *great egrets* and *black-crowned night-herons* could be in trouble. The state-endangered *least shrew* is benefiting from recently completed guidelines for contractors to use in surveying this elusive species. Last year, surveyors visited 26 bat hibernacula. Of the 23 sites inhabited by bats, 14 contained bat species of special concern. The Indiana bat project involves artificial roosts and boxes, sampling insect populations in foraging areas, radio telemetry and an assessment for the widening and realignment of U.S. Route 22.





otters have in common? Now you know. The 1982 osprey patch and the 1983 otter patch are two of the first patches in the WTFW collectible series; they are the two most valuable and most sought after patches among collectors and may bring as much as $500 on the secondary market.



Since its inception, WTFW has generated more than $3 million to benefit wildlife, and the program continues to sell more than 20,000 patches and several hundred prints each year.

To quote from the original flyer accompanying the osprey patch, "under today's funding pressures, it's unrealistic to expect hunters alone to provide completely for all wildlife needs. Constantly growing demands on our environment and natural resources, encroaching suburbs, shopping centers and highways, modern agricultural practices and many other conflicting land uses destroy more and more productive wildlife habitat every day."



Graybill reminds us that, "wildlife needs the support of everyone."

The PGC would like to express a sincere thank you to WTFW contributors. We welcome your continued support and hope you take advantage of the opportunity to purchase the special, limited-issue, 6-inch embroidered patch to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the program. We look forward to Working Together for Wildlife with you for years to come. □





Invest in wildlife and enjoy it for a lifetime when you purchase a WTFW fine art print. Prints are about 15 x 22 inches, $125 unframed or $225 framed, plus shipping & handling. To view and order prints, visit the Outdoor Shop at www.pgc.state.pa.us or call 1-888-888-3459.

Rozell Stidd — An Old Salt

By Bill Bower

Bradford County WCO, Retired

IN COLONIAL TIMES — and really throughout the course of history — salt was extremely important because it was used to preserve food. In 1810 salt was discovered near the Conemaugh River, in Indiana County, after a woman realized that food cooked in water trickling from a rock near her house had a salty taste. A profitable salt industry soon grew and the first salt well was drilled near the town of Saltsburg. By 1840 there were 21 salt works and 24 wells along the Conemaugh River.

Most wells had more oil than salt, and some wells even turned into oil gushers. This was before oil became important, and the oil was simply allowed to spill onto the ground and run into the river. Oil soon became important, though, and the oil boom began. With jobs available in the oil fields, many immigrants moved into the area. One of these was Irvine "Jake" Stidd who, along with his wife, came from Quebec. His family had immigrated from a town named Stidd in Scotland. Mrs. Stidd's maiden name was Pair, a shortened form of La Pierre. Her family tree went back to 1744, when the La Pierres settled in Quebec. These French relatives were trappers who operated for the Hudson Bay Fur Company. So, when Rozell "Rozie" Asher Stidd was born on May 14, 1921, in the small oil boom town of Guffey, in McKean County, he already had the "call of the wild" running through his veins.



Rozie was the first of five children. Growing up in the wilds of Pennsylvania had a lasting effect on his life. Rozie's first four years of education were spent in a 1-room schoolhouse at Guffey. His next four years were in a 2-room schoolhouse at Westline. Along with fishing, hunting and trapping, Rozie roamed the hills and valleys in search of ginseng.

In the late 1930s Rozie's dad died, so for his family's sake he quit school. Lying

about his age, he went to work in the oil fields. He worked for four months, until the oil company learned that he was only 16 and had to let him go. His next job was "catching soles" in a local tannery for 30 cents an hour. Rozie had to walk five miles to and from work every day, until the bottom fell out of the tannery business and the tannery closed.

An uncle residing in Walton, New York, mentioned that he could get Rozie a job building roads. Although it was hard pick and shovel work, he was making 40 cents and hour. One day the bulldozer operator didn't show up, and the boss asked if anyone knew how to operate a D-7 Caterpillar. Rozie had never operated a bulldozer, but had operated tractors, and figured it couldn't be much different. Besides, it paid 50 cents an hour. He raised his hand and was soon on a big D-7. He backed over a bank and stood the dozer upright, though, so the boss fired him. Rozie snapped back, "You can't fire me because I quit."

He went back to the oil fields, but one day a friend, Andy Patrick, came home on leave from the Army Air Corp, and Rozie liked the uniform. Andy told Rozie that he was making $21 a month, plus free clothes, and said that he should sign up. With deer season about to open, Rozie was needed at home to guide hunters who boarded at his house. After deer season was over Rozie went to Langley Field and enlisted in the Army Air Corp. After graduating from boot camp, Rozie was sent to Illinois, to train as a mechanic. There he was put in the Eighth Fighter Group, made up of two squadrons flying P-39s.

With a 20-day leave in December 1941, Rozie went back to Pennsylvania for deer season, and he shot a 14-point buck, the biggest deer he ever got. Also while on leave, he took his high school sweetheart to a movie and proposed to her. She accepted, but that was on the evening of December 6, 1942. The next day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, so the wedding plans were put on hold.

February found Rozie aboard a ship headed for Java, but Java fell to the Japanese, so the ship ended up in Australia. From there he went with a squadron of P-39s to Port Morsby, New Guinea, where for the next 35 months he survived 540 air raids, and was awarded five bronze stars. Finally, he was rotated back to the states for a 30-day leave. While on leave Rozie was married. After reporting back to duty, he went to Foster Field in Texas, where he was put in charge of the night engine changing crew, and got permission to live off base with his new bride.

In July of 1945 Rozie was discharged and returned to the oil fields



MEMBERS of the 4th Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. ROZIE STIDD reported for training on June 1, 1946.

as a pumper for Pennzoil. Two months later he passed the test to become a deputy game protector, and on June 1, 1946, Rozie entered the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, as a member of the 4th Class, where he spent the next 12 months training to become a game protector.

That fall he and fellow classmate N.J. Molski were assigned to work undercover in Tioga County. They were to make connections with men in a camp that during previous hunting seasons had been killing and selling deer. When these men didn't show up at the camp, the two trainees were told to just hang around and watch for anything illegal going on.

They soon met up with some hunters from West Virginia, and over the next few nights the men from West Virginia jacklighted several deer. Upon learning that two of the men were going to return to West Virginia, and while the illegal deer were being loaded into a vehicle, Rozie and Molski made up an excuse to go to town and quickly left. There they called the local game protector, who quickly set up a road check. The poachers' vehicle was stopped, and the men were arrested and put in jail. The minute they learned about the arrests, the hunters remaining at camp became suspicious of Rozie and Molski, and the two trainees quickly got word to the local game protector that more illegally taken deer could be found in a shed behind the camp. Officers arrived the next day and found the deer. Everyone was arrested and put in jail, including Rozie and Molski. After this case was settled and the fines paid, Rozie and Molski were put in the Lycoming County jail under the guise that they had poached a bear.

Their new assignment was to get close to some inmates who had been killing deer illegally. The Division Supervisor, Bob Latimer, was a practical joker, and asked the jailer if the two tough guys had given him a hard time. The jailer said that they hadn't caused any problems. Latimer then had the local game protector take a bear that had been poached to the jail and told the jailer to make sure the men got their

In recognition of his many accomplishments in conservation, Rozie Stidd recently received the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's 2004 Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award. This honor is the highest recognition that agency confers on persons who distinguish themselves in conservation and the enhancement of the aquatic resources of the commonwealth.



ROZIE STIDD, left, with former PGC Commissioners BOB GILFORD, center, and SAM DUNKLE.

Stidd has had a lifelong history of distinguished service. He has long been an active member of Trout Unlimited, and was a leader in efforts to protect public fishing opportunities by having the Little Juniata River declared a public navigable waterway of the commonwealth. Stidd was sworn in as a Commissioner of the Fish and Boat Commission on June 19, 2001, a position he held until his retirement in June 2003.

fill of bear meat. Every time Rozie and Molski went through the chow line they were given bear meat and beans.

In time, after being released, they made arrangements to buy deer from their fellow inmates, and when the suspects showed up, they were met by game protectors and arrested.

Upon graduation from the training school, Rozie was assigned to Lycoming County, and several months later, thanks to his supervisor, Bob Latimer, Rozie was transferred to Sullivan County.

Rozie recalled a big arrest he made while stationed there. Early one October morning he and several other officers searched nine homes in the town of Lopez and found illegally taken venison in seven. In one home an old woman, who spoke only Russian, said to a young girl, "I hope they don't look in the back of the piano." Molski, who was assisting Rozie, could speak a little Russian, and he told Rozie to take the back off the piano, where they found 15 quarts of canned venison.

Although Rozie loved working in Sullivan County, he had always wanted to see Alaska, so when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was hiring agents, Rozie filled out an application. During the interview, he said that he would take the position only if he was assigned to Alaska. He was told that he was unique, as everyone else said they would take the job if they didn't have to go to Alaska.

In late 1951 Rozie became an enforcement agent in the interior of the Territory of Alaska, with headquarters at McGarth, with a population of about 200. His district was approximately the size of Pennsylvania and New Jersey combined and had a population of 7,800; most were natives living in small villages.

Rozie patrolled by plane, boat, snowshoes and even dog sled. It was not uncommon for him to fly into an area, land and arrest a trapper or hunter, and then have to spend the night in the violator's cabin before flying out in the morning.

The agents did everything that needed to be done, and that included keeping the headquarters building in repair, the equipment running, the plane flying and the 2-way radio system maintained. Rozie's diaries mention that many times the oil fire went out in the service house, and frozen oil and water lines had to be continually thawed. The temperatures would sometimes fall to 50 degrees below zero, and when this occurred, blowtorches were used to thaw the pipes.

In Two Plane Crashes

While serving in Alaska Rozie was in two airplane crashes. Diary entry January 15, 1953: "Left Aniak with Agent Reynolds on patrol of Crooked Creek and George River; observed illegal beaver sets on George River and upon landing in a meadow, shed right ski and stood aircraft on nose, damaging prop and right wing tip; radioed C.A.A. at Aniak and gave them our position and asked them to notify USFWS of damage and parts needed; contacted trapper Nick Sakar and chopped out seven beaver snares set around beaver house; seized one fresh beaver skin; remained overnight at trapper's cabin awaiting repair parts."

Rozie loved Alaska, but after two years he realized that his wife and now three children were living in substandard conditions — their first six months were spent in a small log cabin. Although it was a hard decision, Rozie decided to return to Pennsylvania.

Rozie was reinstated as a district game protector and assigned to Potter County, where he stayed for several years. Then he was assigned as a special investigator and later became the Law Enforcement Supervisor in the Southcentral Region Office in Huntingdon. From there he went to Harrisburg as the supervisor of the

hunting license section. Rozie stayed in that position until 1978, when he retired.

Rozie's big love was, and still is, trout fishing. He ties his own flies and boasts that through the years he's caught and released more than 14,000 trout. Because of his love for fishing, Rozie was appointed as a Commissioner for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and served in that capacity for two years, before age and health issues forced him to resign.

Rozie's first wife died and he remarried in 1997. He has three children, ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Being civic minded, Rozie became a member of many conservation and law enforcement organizations and is a member of the 15th Street United Methodist Church in Huntingdon. Rozie had a long and colorful career with the Game Commission. Not many can say that they took their love of the outdoors and made it into such a gratifying career. ☐



ROZIE with his grandaughter HEATHER BRICKLEY. He has three children, ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

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Turkey Hunting Fever

By Dave Cooper

I COULDN'T believe my eyes. Two gobblers were standing in the picked soybean field less than 100 yards away. I slid lower against the dead cherry tree, braced my shotgun on my knee, and then let out a soft cluck with my diaphragm mouth call. The gobblers jerked their heads up and stared at my three decoys. When I clucked again, both turkeys started walking, then running up the hill to the decoys. I clicked off the safety on my Remington 1100 and waited. The birds stood very close together and were right behind one of the decoys. I couldn't risk killing both turkeys — or ruining a decoy — so I waited. Finally, the bigger gobbler moved into the open, and I aimed at its head and pulled the trigger. The gobbler went down like a rock. The other bird just stared at his fallen companion, but when I stood up, he flew down the hill and out of sight.

What a thrill. After years of fruitlessly chasing turkeys up and



down the steep hills of Pennsylvania, I had finally managed to put my tag on a spring gobbler. The turkey, a 15-pound jake with a 5-inch beard, wasn't the biggest gobbler in the woods, but he was a magnificent trophy to me. While carrying the gobbler home, I was already looking forward to the next spring season, a long 12 months away.

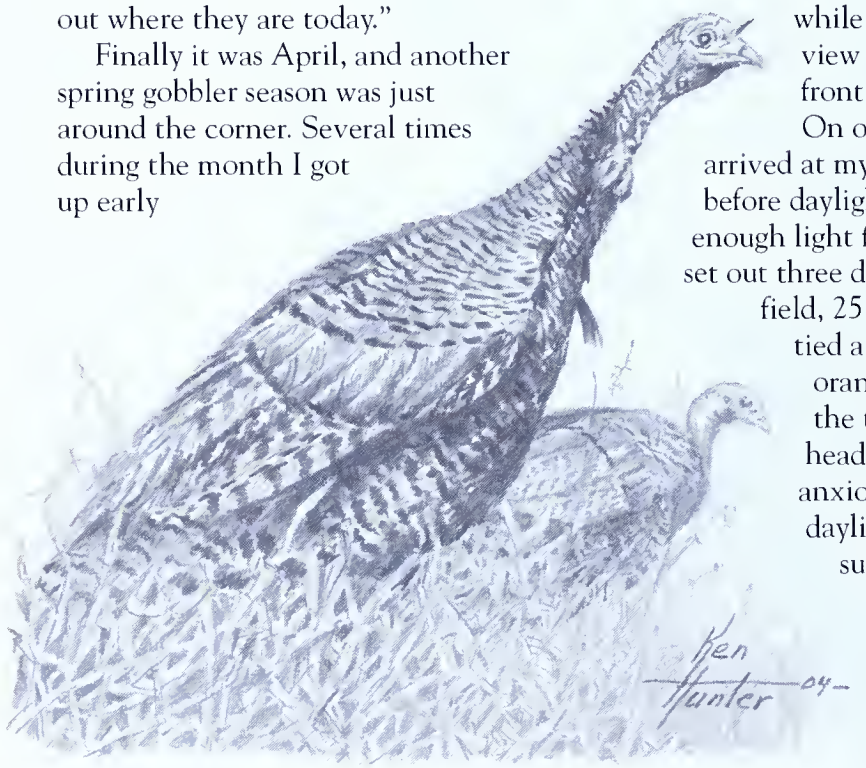
Bagging that gobbler gave me a serious case of "turkey fever," and I could hardly wait to do it again. Throughout the year, I eagerly read every turkey hunting book and magazine article I could get my hands on. I also watched a bunch of videos and even attended two turkey hunting seminars. I nearly drove my wife crazy, practicing my calls and, perhaps most importantly, I picked the brains of several local turkey hunting veterans. All of them stressed one point — the need for preseason scouting. When my expert turkey hunting buddy, Mark, talks turkey, I listen, and he said, "forget where the turkeys were last year; find out where they are today."

Finally it was April, and another spring gobbler season was just around the corner. Several times during the month I got up early just to check the field behind our house where I had gotten my bird the year before. But I never saw any, and I was getting worried. Opening day was fast approaching, and I had still not located any birds. Where could they be? I soon found out.

On the Monday morning before opening day I was outside getting the paper when I heard a faint gobble coming from the swampy woods below our house. Early the next morning I sat where I could watch the field edge of the woods without being seen, and sure enough, just after daylight, a flock of turkeys gathered in the open field to feed. Among them were some really nice gobblers with beards eight to 10 inches long.

The next morning I returned, and once again a large flock came out to feed. The next afternoon I walked along the field edge, searching for the perfect ambush site. I soon found what I was looking for — a large oak tree. It would keep me hidden from turkeys approaching from behind, as well as cover my back for safety's sake, while allowing a clear view of the field in front of me.

On opening day I arrived at my oak tree well before daylight. There was just enough light for me to see as I set out three decoys in the open field, 25 steps away. I then tied a fluorescent orange band around the tree, pulled on my head net and sat anxiously waiting for daylight. Just before sunrise, when the songbirds started chirping, a turkey gobbled in the woods behind



me. I quietly loaded my shotgun. Then another turkey gobbled from deeper in the woods, and when I gave a soft tree call, a third gobbler answered from off to my left. Soon I heard turkeys flying down to the ground, and not long afterwards, the flock filtered out of the woods and into the field about 75 yards away. All of them appeared to be hens and poults, but then three mature gobblers entered the field, and proceeded to fan their tails and strut in front of the feeding hens — out of range of my shotgun.

I remembered reading that if you could get the hens to come in, a gobbler might follow. It was worth a try. I clucked softly with my diaphragm call. Nothing. Then I clucked louder and threw in a soft yelp. That got their attention. Incredibly, while I clucked softly on my mouth call, the flock of hens and poults began following a large hen to the decoys. I was surprised at how much noise they made. The air was filled with loud clucks, yelps, whines and purrs as the parade headed my way. Surprisingly, they walked right past the decoys and didn't stop until the lead hen was standing no more than 20 feet away. She seemed to be staring a hole right through me as she looked for the "hen" that had been doing all the calling. I could see the gobblers watching from a distance, but they didn't move any closer at all.

Then I noticed that the last turkey in the line wasn't a hen at all, but a jake with a 2-inch beard. Ever so slowly, I moved my shotgun so the front bead pointed at the gobbler's head. Should I shoot, I thought. He's legal but small, but only 15 yards away. Then again, one of the big birds might come into range. I decided to wait.

Finally, the lead hen grew tired of looking for the hidden turkey in the woods, turned and led her flock up over the hill, clucking and yelping all the way. Worst of all, the three mature gobblers followed along behind. I tried calling loudly, in hopes of getting them to turn around, but they kept walking away. The last one hesitated as it looked back at my spread of decoys. It gobbled loudly as if to say, "Hey, we're leaving so come on along." But soon he walked over the top of the hill and out of sight.

Man, what a day. My heart was pounding. At first I was disappointed, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that this was, indeed, a great hunt. I had called a whole flock of turkeys to within 20 feet of me. I had passed up a shot at a jake, and matched wits with three mature gobblers.

What more could a turkey hunter ask for? I soon packed up my decoys and headed for home. As I walked along I was planning the next hunt in my mind. Perhaps I'll sit closer to where the gobblers came out of the woods, I thought. Or what would happen if I moved the decoys closer to my stand? Then again, perhaps I should . . . "

Turkey hunting. What a great way to spend a spring day. □

Cover Photo by Hal Korber

THIS BIG GUY looks like he'd be slow on his feet, but rest assured, those chunky hindquarters provide the power for plenty of speed and agility. Pennsylvania's bears get plenty big (some of the largest in the country), and 56 weighing 500 or more pounds were taken by hunters in 2004. The largest bear taken last season was an 834-pound (estimated live weight) male shot by a hunter in Monroe County.

Gobblin'







LUKE KUTZ, Pine Grove, above, with a gobbler he took in Schuylkill County. His daughter, MIRANDA, left, also scored on a mature tom in Schuylkill County. Not to be outdone, Luke's brother MARK KUTZ, Lebanon, upper left, bagged his gobbler with two beards later in the season in Schuylkill County.



Father and son bowbenders MARK and LUKE DEUSSING, Philadelphia, bagged these two gobblers in Bucks County. You'd be surprised at the number of turkeys in this heavily populated southeastern county.

Fever





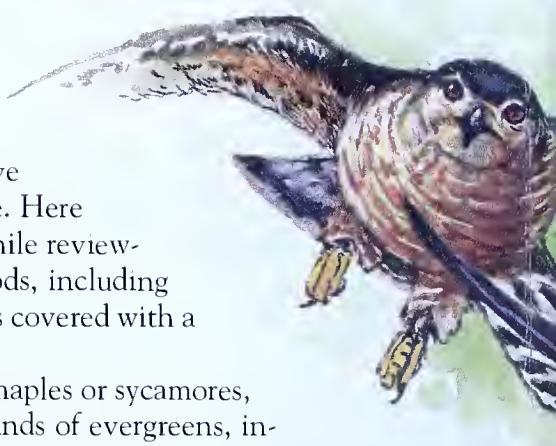
LARRY YADOUGA Jr., Glassport, left, took this 23-pound gobbler with a 10-inch beard on a game lands in Washington County. LYNN SHANK, Middletown, above, got her tom, also with a 10-inch beard, in Lycoming County last spring.



KEITH MIDBERRY, Germantown, Maryland, killed this 24-pound tom with a 10-inch beard in Butler County.



MARIAH ROGERS, 13, Titusville, missed a jake on last year's Youth Hunt day, but a week later bagged this mature tom. Way to go, Mariah!



AS THE TIDAL WAVE of modern sprawl roars ever onward, wilderness and wild things succumb and retreat. An exception to this, however, are older suburbs, especially those post WW II era developments, which have come to harbor sizeable populations of wildlife. Here we now find acres of mature trees. Recently, while reviewing satellite photographs of older neighborhoods, including my own, I was surprised to see how much of it is covered with a substantial canopy.

Almost every street is bordered with oaks, maples or sycamores, while in the expansive yards we find dense stands of evergreens, including blue spruce, white pines, American holly and cedar, and even bamboo. Homeowners have replaced those trees lost to age and disease with both decorative and fruit bearing trees, and with many baby boomers retiring, there's a return to flower and vegetable gardening.

Also providing excellent cover is a vast array of shrubs, some half a century old, thick and woody with age. This shrubbery, initially planted as small, decorative accents along houses or in property corners, have been pruned by successive generations of homeowners into huge geometric oddities, and from curbside, some homes appear to be under siege by hordes of misshapen topiary invaders. Parts of some dwellings are all but obscured by immense rhododendron jungles, lilac, burning bush, cedar and yew.

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by Bob Sopchick

Coop in the 'Hood

Property lines are defined by fences, many overgrown with Virginia creeper, bittersweet, honeysuckle, nightshade and poison ivy, while others are surrounded by stout walls of almost impenetrable privet hedge and barberry. In some pockets, staghorn sumac and pokeberry patches abound, while between properties grapevines flourish, veiling sheds and back alley garages.

These lush environs have become home to great populations of songbirds, and have been made even more inviting with birdhouses, elaborate water features and feeding stations galore. Although dozens of migratory species may move through our suburbs, some of the more common resident birds include cardinals and catbirds, chickadees and titmice, robins, mockingbirds and jays, song sparrows, house finches, goldfinches, house wrens and Carolina wrens, scores of mourning doves and, of course, the omnipresent starlings and grackles.

Mature trees often have quite a few hollow and broken trunks, ideal nesting sites for various woodpeckers and flickers. Crows, too, are constant and familiar neighbors throughout the year.

These habitats of mature trees, fortress-like walls of shrubbery and decorative rock walls also support unchecked populations of gray squirrels, cottontails, woodchucks and chipmunks. Take a pre-dawn walk and seeing an opossum, raccoon, skunk or even the occasional red fox is not unlikely.

In recent years, one raptor that has benefited and is even thriving from the aging of suburbia, is that denizen of the deep woods, the Cooper's hawk, a raptor I liken to as a coyote with feathers.

IN 1828, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon, and a pioneer of systematic ornithology, named the Cooper's hawk for New Yorker William Cooper, who collected the first type specimens that described the species.



Cooper's hawks are accipiters, forest hawks characterized by short, rounded wings, long tails and long legs, with the females noticeably larger than the males. The three species of accipiters in North America are the sharp-shinned hawk, which is about the size of a mourning dove, the Cooper's hawk, which is slightly smaller than a crow, and the northern goshawk, which is crow-size or larger.

The Cooper's hawk has also been known as the "chicken hawk," a name once given to all hawks. Opportunistic hunters, Coops found the free-roaming chickens so many people kept in the early part of the 20th century to be easy prey. Another name, "big blue darter," which I prefer, not only describes the bird's size and color, but also its flight.

Immature Coops have creamy underparts with dark cascading streaks, brown backs and pale yellow-gray to amber eyes. The underparts of mature birds are barred in rusty brown, the backs are blue-gray, and the eyes range from orange to crimson. When the tail is fanned it is easy to see the dark bands and the distinctive white tip.

Because sharpshins and Cooper's hawks are similarly marked, positive identification can be difficult, especially between the female sharpshin and male Cooper's, which are similar in size. Some differences are that the Coop has a rounded tail, not squarish or notched like the sharpie, and the head feathers give it a slightly crested appearance, not rounded like the sharpie's. The legs of the sharpshin appear more spindly, and in flight its head protrudes less, the silhouette more hammer-like.

In flight, all the accipiter's have the lethal shape of an ancient crossbow. These hawks are true sprinters. Able to deftly maneuver in the close quarters of woods and thickets, their deeply notched primary feathers help them to quickly accelerate when they surprise a bird or small mammal, and their long rudder-like tails help them to brake and steer through the thickets. Not foiled when their prey takes to the ground, the accipiters will take to foot, if need be.

Hardly a day goes by that I do not see a Cooper's hawk coursing through the neighborhood. They hunt by slicing across backyards, pulling up quickly into trees or landing atop thick shrubs, looking for movement, always watching. Using the element of surprise, they swoop from a shadowy perch to seize their prey. And should a bird flush, they will give chase. It's easy pickings in some neighborhoods as many homeowners have several birdfeeders in operation during the winter months. With this much fast food available, many Coops now overwinter instead of shifting south.



IN THE SERE LANDSCAPE of late winter the world seems colorless, except for the two male car-



dinals flitting and chasing through the tall shrubs at the back of the neighbor's yard. Their lively antics capture my eye, but right in front of me another bright spot of ruby red glistens in the morning light — the watchful eye of a male Coop not 15 feet from my window, right at eye level.

In the next instant he swoops low and flushes the cardinals, focuses on one, then, without much effort at all, reaches out with a long yellow leg and snags it from the air. I watch him pluck and feed on his kill, and when he is done, he flies back up into a tree and preens in the sun.

In all the years I have been watching these watchers, only once have I seen a Coop take a gray squirrel, and that one was a juvenile. On two occasions, I have seen them kill chipmunks and once, in the deep woods, I saw a Coop take a red squirrel. Even though the neighborhood is overrun with squirrels, the hawks take what is easiest, and that, of course, is songbirds. Besides, squirrels can be fairly tough adversaries.

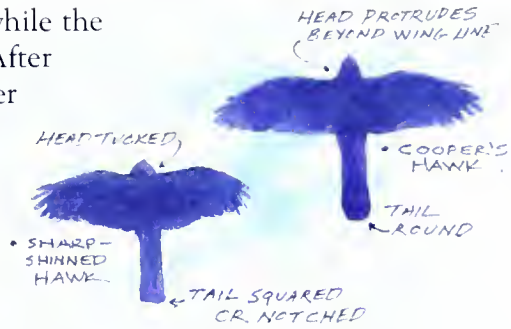
Once I watched a Coop sunning itself atop the stub of a hemlock trunk that had been topped because it grew too near an insulated cable. The cable was a busy runway for squirrels, and on this particular day, a big gray came barreling down the cable as usual, but when it came upon the Coop blocking its way, it quickly slammed on the brakes. Squirrel and hawk eyeballed each other. The hawk flashed its wings and the squirrel backed up a bit, then came on again and again, each time rebuffed by the flashing hawk. Finally, the squirrel, gathering steam, charged down the cable, and just when I thought a collision was inevitable, the hawk leapt up as the squirrel scampered beneath.

The hawks are not disturbed much by the comings and goings of their human neighbors; in fact, few people even notice these big birds with the 3-foot wingspans. Of course, there are some who get upset about the hawks killing birds at their feeders, but the Coop is so secretive and quick that most folks see little more than the occasional pile of feathers left on the lawn. Some people are startled, however, to find the big birds splashing about in their birdbaths, and might even be more alarmed to see that the Coop may not actually be bathing, but drowning a victim, as they sometimes do.

The best time to see suburban Cooper's hawks is in the winter, when the trees are without leaves and birdfeeders are crowded. In early spring, during the courtship flights, the birds are not only active, but quite vocal as well. Listen for a flicker-like call, *kek-kek-kek*. Young hawks leave the nest about midsummer, and as they are introduced to the world, testing their wings and learning to hunt, there's lots of activity at this time.

THE TALL TREES of old suburbia provide plenty of ideal nesting sites. Coops nest from 20 to 60 feet above ground, building substantial platform nests of branches, twigs and sticks. Nests are about two feet in diameter, and eight to 16 inches deep, and are usually located in a high crotch of a deciduous tree. Sometimes they build upon former nests or on old squirrel or crow nests. The nest cup is lined with bark chips, and the female lays three to five brown-spotted bluish-white eggs. The clutch is incubated for 36

days; the male helping to incubate the eggs while the female feeds on food he has brought to her. After hatching, the young males leave the nest after 30 days, the females at 34, and at eight weeks of age they will be hunting on their own.



Late last summer I watched an immature male scatter several house finches from a feeder. One of the birds took refuge in an adjacent hedge. The young Coop tried to drive the finch from the hedge by repeatedly swooping up and landing on top of the hedge, but the finch never budged. With wings outspread the hawk jumped up and down, time and again, atop the finch's hiding place. The finch held tight. Trying a new tactic, the Coop leaped up from the ground, trying to drive the finch up and out, but the finch did not move. The Coop tried this from the other side of the hedge, but again without success. I imagine the view from inside the hedge was quite terrifying. The persistent hawk then walked gingerly atop the hedge, tilting its head and thrusting a big yellow fist down in, but did not come up with a feather.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, another Coop, a larger immature bird that I believe to be his sibling, drove him off. He alighted in a pawpaw tree nearby and watched as big sister took over.

She employed the same tactics, jumping, flashing, probing, but the finch held on for dear life in its privet hedge sanctuary. Frustrated, she perched on a nearby wire and waited. Then, out of the recesses of a white pine a hummingbird zipped out and buzzed her repeatedly. The tables were turned. She took off, the hummer in pursuit, right behind her head, and when her tiny tormentor pulled alongside she almost plucked him from the air with a lightning-like move.



The Coop will no doubt continue to flourish in older suburbia, and its presence is more welcome by nature lovers here than in farmyards long ago. The only real danger is its inability to distinguish between a corridor in the trees and the reflection of one in a plate glass window.

THERE IS ONE Cooper's hawk permanently imbedded in glass that I hope many readers will travel to see. Last year, I designed a stained glass vestibule wall in the new Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art building in Millersburg. The committee requested a landscape design for the wall, and visitors would pass through the double doors in this wall to the classrooms and gallery area beyond.

With sketchbook in hand, I traveled to Ned's old stomping grounds, and from the top of Berry's Mountain I came out on a right-of-way and looked south down the Susquehanna River. It was all there in front of me, all that Ned wrote about and painted so eloquently: a sky with a dynamic cloudscape, distant farm fields, the fabled river and islands, the far-off blue hills, all framed by the woods.

Back at the studio, I came up with a design that I felt would work, but it lacked a certain spark. It needed something wild. While sitting in the chair looking out the window, a Cooper's hawk sliced across the horizon, and I had the final element that made it come alive, a creature that embodied the fleeting heartbeat of wild places, but the wherewithal to exist with man. I think Ned would have liked the choice.

FIELD NOTES

Happens More Than You Think

CLINTON — I was doing a program on rabies for 50 6th grade students when I asked if anyone had ever received post exposure rabies shots, or knew of any family member who had done so. I was surprised when six children raised their hands.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Big Fans

TIOGA — For four consecutive years a pair of ospreys has been nesting atop light poles 35 feet above the football field at the Cowanesque Valley High School. The wooden poles supporting the lights have been in place for 25 years, so on one of the coldest days during the winter, crews from Tri-County Rural Electric erected a new pole with a nesting platform and transferred the old nest to it. Many thanks go to Jeff Fetzer from Tri-County Electric and school principal Mike Schwartz for working with me on this project.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Lasting Legacy

WASHINGTON — Early this year Mr. Clyde Haywood, 96, of Monongahela passed away. Clyde taught HTE courses from the mid-1950s until 2003, nearly 50 years of volunteer service to the sportsmen of Pennsylvania. During this time, he set up and taught from between five to ten courses per year, which is an outstanding record. It's impossible to know how many new hunters were introduced to hunting or trapping with one of Clyde's courses, but there must be thousands. On behalf of the Game Commission, I would like to offer condolences to his family; his contribution is not forgotten and he will be missed.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Hotspot

ERIE — My district is booming with turkeys. Big gobblers were plentiful during the winter, dragging their beards through the snow. Get out and hunt or "hunt" with your camera this season.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Punxsutawney Tom?

I was hiking in February when I came across a rock outcropping that formed a natural overhang with a small cave in the rear. Imagine my surprise when I peered in and a gobbler exploded into flight. All I can figure is that the cave provided refuge from the deep snow and howling wind. If I hadn't disturbed him, maybe he wouldn't have emerged until spring.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE



Far Reaching Little Magazine

BERKS — At our display at the Harrisburg Farm Show, Mrs. Mickki Passmore stopped by to let us know how much she and her son, Staff Sgt. Christopher Crawford, enjoy reading *Game News*. Currently stationed in Iraq, Chris passes his magazine on to British troops stationed near him, so they, too, can enjoy it. It makes you wonder where *Game News* ultimately ends up.

— WCO DAVE BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Mystery Find

LACKAWANNA — Last June, 8-year-old Shayla McCord of Adrian, Michigan, and her classmates, launched a baloon at their elementary school. The attached postcard asked the person who found it to write back and tell where it had landed. While walking on SGL 91 last fall I found Shayla's postcard. The balloon had actually traveled from near Lansing, Michigan, to Springbrook, Pennsylvania. I knew that my 8-year-old daughter Kristen would love to see the card; and it didn't take her long to become pen pals with Shayla. Take it from a father of five, introduce your youngsters to some fun in the outdoors and take them for a hike on one of our many game lands; you never know what you'll find.

— FIELD FORESTER, JIM REAP, AVOCA

Something To Think About

PERRY — It should be another banner gobbler season, based on the number of large flocks reported during the late winter. Our statistics show that more hunters are shot while hunting turkeys than any other species. I have investigated many such incidents over the years, but have yet to find a victim who had been wearing fluorescent orange. While it's true that no one should be shot in mistake for a turkey, the fact remains that it happens. Simply wearing some fluorescent orange can, and does, prevent such incidents.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Have Me Pegged

POTTER — A local store owner notified me that she had several containers of outdated food items that she thought I might be able to use to trap nuisance bears. My eyes bulged when I saw the two huge barrels filled with peanut M&Ms, but the store owner quickly spun the barrels around so that I could see she had written "For Yogi Bear Only — Not Denise" on the back side. Apparently, my reputation for appreciating chocolate precedes me.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORKS



Wise Birds

CENTRE — For a second consecutive year a pair of bald eagles built a nest here in the Bald Eagle Valley at the base of Bald Eagle Ridge on Bald Eagle State Park.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS

Strung Up

SNYDER — Mike Gill was archery hunting when he heard what sounded like a cow loose on the mountain. After investigating he found a bear hanging from a tree branch by one of its back feet. Mike called the region office, and LMO Steve Bernardi and I went to the site. After tranquilizing the bear, Steve climbed the tree and attached a rope to the bear's free leg, while sportsmen Gary Gill, Guy Kerstetter, Gary Kratzer and I took the weight off the stuck leg, so Steve could remove the foot from the fork in the tree. We lowered the bear to the ground and attached ear tags, and after the drug wore off, the bear was able to walk fairly well. We're confident it will have little trouble surviving its ordeal.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE

Banner Day

SCHUYLKILL — Roy Dengler from Taylorsville said that on February 5, the last day of rabbit season, he kicked out six bunnies and bagged four. Not bad for any day.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Topsy-Turvy

SOMERSET — It was the mildest winter that I can ever recall, and on January 15 I picked up a roadkilled bear. On January 28 I noticed three meadowlarks in the Brush Creek area. On February 1 someone reported seeing a dozen bluebirds near Berlin, and as early as March 8 robins were reported in the Somerset area.

— WCO STANLEY NORRIS, FAIRHOPE

Giant Task

LYCOMING — I've been chosen to fill the shoes of WCO Dirk Remensnyder while he is serving his country on active duty. If you've never met Dirk, he is 6-10 and wears size 13 boots. Recently, while I was meeting with an individual in Union County about an incident that had occurred there, he mentioned that he thought I was much taller the last time he saw me. I stated that I was — 10 inches and 3 boot sizes bigger. After explaining, we both had a good laugh.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTOURSVILLE



Must Be Those Marbles

HUNTINGDON — The waitress at a local restaurant told me that she worked with my son a few years ago. She asked me how Travis was doing, and when I said that he was in Iraq she replied, "Did he wreck another car?" I never did speak very clearly.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON



Small But Wiry

BLAIR — Trapping nuisance bears can be a little scary for a new deputy, but it was even scarier for my new deputy Scott and me when, while talking to a farmer who told us three or four bears at a time regularly come pouring out of the cornfield we were parked near, a hen pheasant flew in the open vehicle window near Scott. His self-defense reactions were, to say the least, exquisite. To top it off, though, later that day, while retrieving the culvert trap, the same pheasant tried again to fly in the window. After the original fight with the bird, my now experienced deputy said he'd be safer riding in the culvert trap with the bears rather than deal with the pheasant with the attitude.

— WCO ALBERT G. ZELLNER, ROARING SPRING

Can't Win

ELK — I was scheduled to give a program on bears for my daughter's elementary school class, but a few days before, I accidentally shaved off half of my mustache. I went ahead and shaved the other side, but when my daughter saw I was clean-shaven she said, "That better grow back by Friday, because you're going to embarrass me in front of my class. After the program on Friday I asked my daughter if I had embarrassed her. She replied, "Only when you told everyone you were my dad."

— WCO DOTY A. MCDOWELL, ST. MARYS

"No, We'll Take Care of You"

FRANKLIN — A waterways conservation officer friend and I were attending a social function when some individuals we were talking to invited me to go fishing the following morning. When I declined because I hadn't brought my fishing license, one of the individuals replied, "Don't worry, you don't need a license; we'll take care of you." I glanced at my friend, who was grinning from ear to ear.

— WCO TRAVIS PUGH, GREENCASTLE

Slightly Exaggerated

TIOGA — I received a report that someone had seen a 65-pound black cat with a 30-inch tail on Route 414 near Liberty. I followed the tracks on the fresh snow for a half-mile to a den site, and when I peered in, a 10- to 15-pound fisher was looking back at me. Although disappointed at not finding a black panther, I was thrilled to see this elusive member of the weasel family.

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, WELLSBORO

Silver Lining

A big ice storm we had earlier in the year was hard on some trees but good for deer. The Shade Mountain Chapter of the NWTF was scheduled to help cut browse and do some timber stand improvement, but with all the browse down on the top of the mountain due to the storm, their efforts were used elsewhere.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Didn't Make Sense

WESTMORELAND — Deputy John Kozubal checked a hunter on the second Saturday of the late antlerless season in WMU 2B, who had an antlerless license that belonged to another person. Now both are facing charges for a license violation that may end up costing quite a bit more than $6. The sad part is that there were still antlerless licenses available for WMU 2B.

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK

Not Forgotten

MERCER — Jerry Shingledecker was an active deputy for nearly three decades before retiring in 1999. He served the PGC, the sportsmen and our wildlife resources with great pride and dedication, much as he had served our country as a Marine. When Jerry passed away, it was his fellow PGC officers who carried him to his resting place, where a VFW honor guard conducted a military service. Jerry always had a signature farewell after checking hunters in the field, and those words are, indeed, a fitting epitaph. So, Jerry, on behalf of our wildlife resources and everyone who has benefited from your commitment to protecting them: Thanks for your time and trouble.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE



What are You Trying to Say?

LACKAWANNA — One sunny winter day WCO Dan Figured, Deputy Ron Kelly and I went out to check wood duck boxes on SGL 300. The snow was about six inches deep and the ice appeared to be strong. Dan led the way and I followed, with Ron bringing up the rear. We walked in each other's footsteps, but when we heard a noise coming from Ron's direction we noticed that he was shin deep in water and mud. The funny thing was that Dan and I walked over the same spot that Ron had fallen into. Maybe that bag Ron carried was heavier than it looked.

— DEPUTY ROBERT KRUKOVITZ, OLYPHANT

Sticky Fingers

CLARION — Deputy Hepler and I followed a set of tracks in the snow leading to a culvert along a roadside. When we got to the culvert, we peered inside with a flashlight and were pleasantly surprised to see a porcupine looking back at us. When we left I tried to get out of the steep ditch, but kept slipping on the snow-covered bank. Grabbing a small pine tree, I pulled myself out, but now my hand was covered in sticky pinesap. It seems the porcupine had gnawed bark from the tree and exposed the cambium layer.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, CLARION

Will Be Missed

CRAWFORD — On December 31, WCO David Myers, whose district was in the western part of the county, retired after more than 30 years of service. Dave and I have been neighboring officers since I arrived upon graduation from the Ross Leffler School in February 1992. I say goodbye to not only a fine officer and true professional, but to a friend as well. I want to publicly thank Dave for his dedicated years of service to the public, the resource and its habitat, and for all his assistance. May you have a wonderful retirement, Dave, and may your "live well" always be full.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Helping Hand

We received a grant from the Firestone/Bridgestone Corporation to use at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. These monies are earmarked for a Migration Map for the Visitors Center, depicting the migration routes of tundra swans, snow geese and Canada geese. During these times of tight budgets, corporate grants are a funding source that the staff at Middle Creek hopes to use to continue the improvements made at the Visitors Center. Many thanks to the local Firestone/Bridgestone representative Lane Flick, who assisted in securing this grant.

— EES BERT MYERS, MIDDLE CREEK WMA.

Mental Note for Next Year

SOMERSET — The first day of the regular small game season was extremely busy in my district. I believe the secret is out on where some of the best pheasant hunting is taking place, because every parking area on SGL 82 seemed to be full to capacity.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE



On the Trail

A hunter, who I'll refer to as "Cliffy," took a shot at a deer this season and then circled the area looking for a blood trail. He found some blood and started tracking when he yelled to his father to come over to help. When his dad got there he laughed and said, "Son, you're tracking yourself." It seems his scope had cut his eyebrow when he missed the deer.

— LMO JOHN P. DZEMYAN, SMETHPORT

Lucky Bruin

WESTMORELAND — On the Sunday before bear season a small bear got caught by its two front toes in a local trapper's fox set. I had to tranquilize it, which meant that it couldn't be released until after the season, because the drug in the bear's system could taint the meat if it was taken by a hunter. This bear drew a "bye" for the season, as I had to hold it over in a culvert trap inside the SGL 42 maintenance building. As bear hunters trudged up the mountain past the building, the bear was yards away, eating Krispy Kreme donuts.

— WCO THOMAS FAZI, LIGONIER

2004-05 Deer harvest: 409,320

HUNTERS TOOK an estimated 409,320 deer last year, which amounts to about a 12 percent decline from 2003-04's harvest of 464,890, yet is still the sixth highest harvest since 1986, when the agency began releasing "calculated" deer harvest results, rather than just the number of deer for which report cards were received.

Specifically, last year's harvest consisted of 124,410 antlered deer and 284,910 antlerless deer, compared to the previous year's 142,270 antlered deer and 322,620 antlerless deer.

Bowhunters took 62,460 deer (28,070 antlered and 34,390 antlerless), compared to 65,100 deer (30,960 antlered and 34,440 antlerless) in 2003-04. Muzzleloader hunters harvested 31,270 deer (1,090 antlered and 30,180 antlerless) last year, compared to 35,860 (1,240 antlered and 34,420 antlerless) the year before.

Overall, compared to 2003-04, the 2004-05 statewide antlered deer harvest was down 13 percent, ranging from a decline of 35 percent in WMU 2G to an increase of 13 percent in WMU 4B; and the statewide antlerless deer harvest declined 12 percent, ranging from a drop of 48 percent in WMU 2G to an increase of 51 percent in WMU 2B.

"These figures reinforce what we've been hearing from many hunters, that they didn't see or take as many deer this past hunting season in some areas," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Wildlife Management Bureau director. "Harvests declining by more than 20 percent in WMUs 1B, 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3D and 4D coincide with areas where hunters have expressed their concerns of too few deer. However, harvest data in some units, such as 2A and 5C, indicate good populations."

Harvest figures for the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), which enables landowners to target hunter pressure where needed, are not available at this time, as report cards from only 75 percent of the 34,135 DMAP permits issued have been returned. (Holders of DMAP permits are required to submit report cards whether they do or do not take a deer with them.)

DuBrock also noted that this year Game Commission deer aging teams examined more than 34,000 deer at deer processing facilities across the state. As in past years, tag numbers from this sample were then cross-checked with report cards submitted by hunters to establish reporting rates for antlered and antlerless deer by WMUs. These reporting rates are then factored into the number of report cards submitted by hunters to estimate deer harvests.

Although this method of calculating deer harvests provides reliable harvest estimates at the WMU level, it is the finer scale estimates that suffer when reporting rates are low.

"At the current level of report card returns, attempts to address deer management concerns in units smaller than the existing WMUs, such as county or township levels, are futile

due to a lack of data," DuBrock said. "When reporting rates are low, the details are lost and management must proceed at the scale where reliable data are available, which currently is the WMU level."

DuBrock noted that it is important to point out that hunters submitted nearly 170,000 deer harvest report cards to the agency for this past season. "That we continue to receive such a large number of report cards indicates many hunters are following through with their obligation to report their deer harvest," DuBrock said. "But the loss of information created by so many other hunters not reporting their deer harvests isn't helping the Game Commission in its efforts to manage deer to the best of its ability.

"When reporting rates — for both antlerless and antlered deer — drop to the 40 percent level they hit for the 2004 season, the precision of the harvest estimate is compromised."

DuBrock noted that deer harvest data, as well as comments from hunters, demonstrates that the agency's efforts to reduce the deer herd in some units are working.

"By decreasing the deer herd, and thereby deer impacts on the habitat in these areas, we believe that overbrowsed habitat will begin to recover, so that these areas can one day sustain higher deer numbers, as well as other game and nongame species," DuBrock said. "In other words, we are asking hunters to work with us and endure some short term pain, in terms of lower deer densities, so that we can achieve long term gain, in terms of better habitat that supports more deer and other wildlife.

"Also, by combining harvest information with age information collected by our deer aging teams we can see the success of the new antler restrictions in place over the past three hunting seasons. Of the bucks, 50 percent were 2.5 years old or older, compared to only 20 percent being that old prior to antler restrictions. More than 60,000 2.5-year-old bucks being killed in one year has to be a new state record, and many hunters have commented about taking very nice or the nicest bucks of their lives this past year."

DuBrock also noted that the harvest data showed that the statewide antlerless deer harvest was comprised of 22 percent button bucks, which is about average, although that figure varied by WMU, ranging from 16 percent in WMU 2G to 32 percent in WMU 5D.

Deer harvest estimates by WMU are:

WMU 1A: archery, 1,480 antlered, 1,950 antlerless; muzzleloader, 100 antlered, 1,860 antlerless; total, 5,100 antlered, 15,600 antlerless.

WMU 1B: archery, 1,190 antlered, 970 antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 antlered, 1,090 antlerless; total, 5,400 antlered, 12,000 antlerless.

WMU 2A: archery, 1,540 antlered, 1,590 antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 antlered, 2,180 antlerless; total, 7,800 antlered, 18,500 antlerless.

WMU 2B: archery, 2,140 antlered, 4,570 antlerless; muzzleloader, 70 antlered, 1,420 antlerless; total, 4,200 antlered, 16,000 antlerless.

WMU 2C: archery, 1,820 antlered, 1,640 antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 antlered, 1,830 antlerless; total, 8,600 antlered, 19,500 antlerless.

WMU 2D: archery, 2,570 antlered, 1,840 antlerless; muzzleloader, 90 antlered, 2,350 antlerless; total, 10,500 antlered, 22,100 antlerless.

WMU 2E: archery, 780 antlered, 530 antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 antlered, 810 antlerless; total, 4,400 antlered, 8,100 antlerless.

WMU 2F: archery, 840 antlered, 730

antlerless; muzzleloader, 30 antlered, 1,240 antlerless; total, 6,400 antlered, 13,100 antlerless.

WMU 2G: archery, 590 antlered, 690 antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 antlered, 1,300 antlerless; total, 6,600 antlered, 10,600 antlerless.

WMU 3A: archery, 560 antlered, 960 antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 antlered, 1,410 antlerless; total, 4,200 antlered, 11,600 antlerless.

WMU 3B: archery, 1,010 antlered, 1,050 antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 antlered, 1,710 antlerless; total, 6,400 antlered, 13,400 antlerless.

WMU 3C: archery, 940 antlered, 920 antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 antlered, 1,410 antlerless; total, 6,900 antlered, 13,500 antlerless.

WMU 3D: archery, 860 antlered, 1,120 antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 antlered, 1,160 antlerless; total, 4,500 antlered, 9,800 antlerless.

WMU 4A: archery, 300 antlered, 550 antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 antlered, 1,220 antlerless; total, 4,100 antlered, 11,000 antlerless.

WMU 4B: archery, 850 antlered, 840 antlerless; muzzleloader, 30 antlered, 1,090 antlerless; total, 4,900 antlered, 11,000 antlerless.

WMU 4C: archery, 1,400 antlered, 1,340 antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 antlered, 1,460 antlerless; total, 5,400 antlered, 12,100 antlerless.

WMU 4D: archery, 910 antlered, 1,020 antlerless; muzzleloader, 70 antlered, 1,250 antlerless; total, 6,300 antlered, 12,700 antlerless.

WMU 4E: archery, 840 antlered, 1,110 antlerless; muzzleloader, 30 antlered, 1,180 antlerless; total, 4,100 antlered, 11,000 antlerless.

WMU 5A: archery, 430 antlered, 730 antlerless; muzzleloader, 30 antlered, 900 antlerless; total, 2,400 antlered, 7,300 antlerless.

WMU 5B: archery, 2,890 antlered, 3,200 antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 antlered, 1,710 antlerless; total, 7,400 antlered, 14,800 antlerless.

WMU 5C: archery, 3,170 antlered, 4,920 antlerless; muzzleloader, 110 antlered, 1,450 antlerless; total, 7,100 antlered, 16,900 antlerless.

WMU 5D: archery, 880 antlered, 2,110 antlerless; muzzleloader, 10 antlered, 140 antlerless; total, 1,300 antlered, 4,200 antlerless.

Unknown WMU: archery, 80 antlered, 10 antlerless; muzzleloader, 0 antlered, 10 antlerless; total, 410 antlered, 110 antlerless.

DuBrock also noted that as the Game Commission completes its transition to WMUs, this will be the last year county harvest estimates will be provided. County estimates include only deer that could be assigned to a county. For example, because the WMU letter and number is preprinted on antlerless ear tags and report cards, and some hunters didn't record the county of kill, county harvests will not equal the official estimates provided for WMUs.

The county harvest estimates, antlered and antlerless are:

Adams, 1,200, 3,400;
Allegheny, 2,100, 6,000;
Armstrong, 3,200, 6,700;
Beaver, 1,200, 3,600;
Bedford, 3,100, 6,700 ;
Berks, 3,100, 8,000;
Blair, 1,300, 2,400;
Bradford, 4,300, 8,400;
Bucks, 1,900, 4,400;
Butler, 2,800, 6,600;
Cambria, 2,100, 3,900;
Cameron, 500, 700;
Carbon, 700, 1,700;
Centre, 2,200, 4,700;
Chester, 2,200, 5,300;
Clarion, 2,300, 4,800;
Clearfield, 3,300, 6,000;
Clinton, 1,100, 2,000;
Columbia, 1,600, 3,900;
Crawford, 3,200, 7,600;

Cumberland, 900, 2,800;
Dauphin, 1,500, 2,800;
Delaware, 200, 1,100;
Elk, 1,200, 2,400;
Erie, 1,700, 3,900;
Fayette, 2,000, 4,200;
Forest, 1,200, 2,500;
Franklin, 1,700, 4,200;
Fulton, 900, 3,000;
Greene, 2,800, 6,700;
Huntingdon, 2,800, 6,200;
Indiana, 3,400, 6,400;
Jefferson, 2,800, 5,800;
Juniata, 1,000, 2,100;
Lackawanna, 900, 1,900;
Lancaster, 1,600, 3,500;
Lawrence, 500, 1,800;
Lebanon, 800, 1,600;
Lehigh, 1,000, 2,900;
Luzerne, 2,200, 4,900;
Lycoming, 2,900, 4,500;
McKean, 1,400, 3,800;
Mercer, 2,000, 6,000;
Mifflin, 800, 1,400;
Monroe, 1,300, 2,600;
Montgomery, 1,100, 2,100;
Montour, 300, 800;
Northampton, 1,000, 2,200;
Northumberland, 1,000, 3,100;
Perry, 1,800, 4,400;
Philadelphia, 40, 90;
Pike, 1,100, 2,700;
Potter, 2,100, 5,500;
Schuylkill, 2,200, 6,200;
Snyder, 500, 1,200;
Somerset, 2,200, 7,300;
Sullivan, 1,300, 2,500;
Susquehanna, 2,700, 5,200;
Tioga, 3,300, 6,400;
Union, 600, 900;
Venango, 2,200, 5,400;
Warren, 2,200, 5,000;
Washington, 4,000, 9,400;
Wayne, 1,900, 3,800;
Westmoreland, 4,000, 9,600;
Wyoming, 1,100, 2,500; and
York, 3,800 , 6,600.

Charges filed in Centre/Clearfield County poaching case

WCO CHRIS IVICIC recently filed charges against six individuals for their involvement in a 2-night shooting spree that took place last fall, two weeks prior to the opening of deer season, and resulted in the poaching of at least 20 deer.

Charges for two 16-year-olds and four adults include 20 counts of unlawful use of lights while hunting; two counts of loaded firearms in vehicles; two counts of restrictions on recreational spotlighting; two counts of littering and restrictions on vehicles; and one count on regulations, possession without a permit. Game and Wildlife Code charges were filed before District Justice Allen Sinclair in Philipsburg.

If convicted on all counts, the individuals face fines of up to $12,900. Revocations on these individuals' hunting and furtaking privileges combined could total up to 47 years.

Michael W. Welder Jr., 19; Brooks R. Fry, 21; and a 16-year-old juvenile, all of Philipsburg, were each charged with three counts of unlawful use of lights while hunting.

Joshua M. Mackey, 19, of Moundsville, West Virginia — formerly of Philipsburg — also was charged with three counts of unlawful use of lights while hunting.

David L. Shoffner, 22, and a 16-year-old, both of Philipsburg, were each charged with four counts of unlawful use of lights while hunting, along with a single charge each of

loaded firearms in vehicles; littering and restrictions on vehicles; and restrictions on recreational spotlighting. The 16-year-old also received one charge under Title 58, Regulations.

According to the defendants' statements, they were not sure how many deer they actually shot. Their own estimations were anywhere from 25 to 35, including several large-rack bucks. Some of the deer were shot multiple times. The investigation resulted in sufficient evidence to charge them with 20 deer.

"This is a case of gross disrespect for wildlife and for hunting ethics," said WCO Ivicic. "I would like to thank those who contacted us and provided the information we needed to file these charges."

Guilty plea in York County bear gall and deer antler case

FOLLOWING a 2-year investigation, Game Commission officials have announced a plea agreement involving Chong Chol So, 66, of Hanover, regarding several charges stemming from his illegal purchases of black bear gall bladders and white-tailed deer antlers in velvet, beginning in 2000. Purchasing such parts is a violation of the Pennsylvania Game and Wildlife Code. Charges were filed by York County WCO Chad Eyler in 2003.

The guilty plea agreement between the defendant and the Game Commission was heard in front of District Justice Mervin L. Dubs in Hanover, on Feb. 18. Through the agreement, So pled guilty to two counts of illegally purchasing black bear gall bladders and one count of illegally purchasing white-tailed deer antlers in velvet.

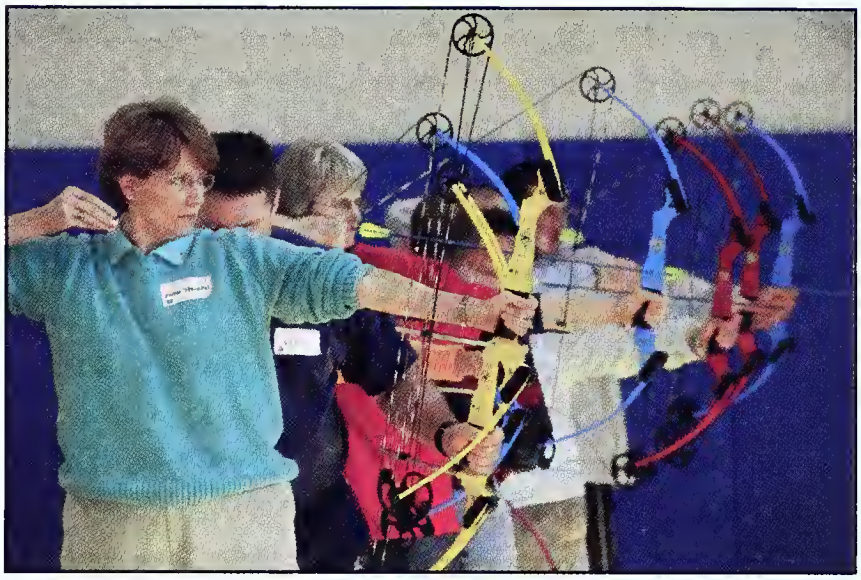
While black bear and white-tailed deer may be lawfully hunted in Pennsylvania, the purchasing or selling of these species, or parts of these species, is prohibited or strictly controlled by both state and federal laws.

Black bear gall bladders and white-tailed deer antlers in velvet are used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Traditional Korean Medicine (TKM) for a variety of ailments. The illegal buying and selling of wildlife and wildlife parts such as these are part of an annual $1.25 billion international trade and part of the annual $200 million U.S. trade. The illegal wildlife market now rivals the illegal drug trade in profit margins.

The bile found in black bear gall bladders contains ursodeoxycholic acid (UDCA) and is considered to treat a variety of illnesses in TCM and TKM. Deer are considered one of the most important ingredients in TCM, and of the 40-plus deer species in the world, the white-tailed deer antler in velvet is one of the most highly prized.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

National Archery in the Schools Program comes to PA



PENNSYLVANIA has become the 22nd state to adopt the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). NASP is a joint effort between the participating Pennsylvania schools, the Game Commission, and the archery industry in Pennsylvania and nationwide.

The program promotes Olympic-style archery training in kindergarten through 12th grade physical education classes. The core content covers archery history, safety, techniques, equipment, mental concentration and self-improvement. In addition, the archery curricula can also be integrated into social studies, mathematics, visual arts, history and English/Language arts.

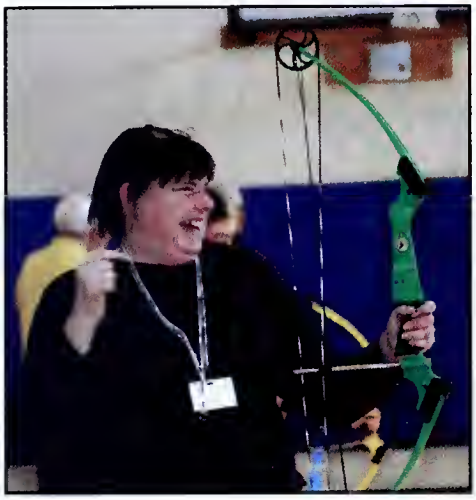
"As more students become familiar with archery, the next step for many would be to test their new skills in the field," said J. Carl Graybill Jr., Game Commission Bureau of Information and Education director. "Further, those students who participate in NASP, but do not take up hunting, will at least have a better understanding and appreciation for archery and bow hunting."

Students shoot at bullseye targets and use state-of-the-art equipment designed to fit most students. Thanks to support from the archery industry, equipment kits can be purchased at a discounted rate. The kits include 11 Mathews Genesis bows; five dozen arrows; one safety net; one repair kit; five targets; one storage box; and one bow holder.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.



AT PENNSYLVANIA'S first NASP teacher workshop, held in February at the Game Commission headquarters, 44 educators became certified to present this archery program in schools.

The program has been Act 48 credit approved for Pennsylvania teachers. Physical Education teachers must attend a level 1 NAA (National Archery Association) training seminar for about eight hours.

Pennsylvania's first teacher workshop was held in February, at the Game Commission headquarters in Harrisburg, and 44 teachers were certified to offer program instruction. There are 21 schools already enrolled to offer the program.

Certified archery instructors should contact the state coordinator if interested in volunteering to train during teacher workshops. An application will be sent upon request. Pennsylvania's NASP currently is looking for level 2 instructors and above, however, interested individuals who are not certified can apply.

Pennsylvania's NASP also is seeking donations to provide financial aid to statewide schools. Any organization, business or club that would like to donate to this program should contact the state coordinator. Individuals interested in supporting NASP also may schedule an appointment for a presentation.

Learn more about the program at www.nasparchery.com or by contacting the Pennsylvania coordinator, Denise Raum at 1-800-829-7408 ext. 205; denise@lancasterarchery.com; or write to 2195-A Old Philadelphia Pike, Lancaster, PA 17602.

Turkey hunters: Safety first

HUNTERS are reminded of their obligation to hunt safely in the upcoming turkey season, which begins Saturday, April 30, and concludes May 28. In the past three years, 27 hunters have been shot in our spring season; 23 were shot in mistake for wild turkeys. One hunter died.

Mistake-for-game incidents occur because hunters mistake the movements or sounds of another hunter for those of a wild turkey. Vegetation and camouflage clothing almost always impede the shooter's ability to identify the victim, and the shooter's judgment is often clouded by the excitement of closing in on what is thought to be a wild turkey.

"In Pennsylvania, turkey hunting remains a sport that requires your utmost attention," says Keith Snyder, chief of the Game Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education Division. "Every year, some hunters are shooting at movements or sounds they misinterpret as a turkey. The results have been devastating. Please, before you even think about pulling the trigger, make sure the turkey is fully and plainly visible and has a beard on its



U.S. SENATOR RICK SANTORUM was one of the thousands of Pennsylvanians who support hunting and wildlife to stop by the Pennsylvania Game Commission booth at the 2005 Eastern Sports and Outdoor Show in Harrisburg. This year's Game Commission booth, which is being used at other sports shows and fairs around the state, focuses on the agency's deer management program.

chest. Following this simple 2-step checklist can make the woods safer for everyone."

The Game Commission encourages all hunters to hunt defensively in the upcoming weeks. It's one of the best ways to ensure that you leave the woods without incident.

Hunting regulations require all hunters to wear at least 100 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head (a hat) while moving through the woods. While hunters may remove their orange after reaching their calling position, the Game Commission encourages them to display a fluorescent orange alert band near their hunting position. The band may alert others who may be closing in on the calls or decoys that a person is in the area. Hunters also are encouraged to place decoys in a way that will limit their susceptibility to in-the-line-of-fire shotgun discharges from approaching hunters.

In the spring, only bearded turkeys may be taken. (The beard is the hair-like feathers on the bird's chest.) Hunters are also encouraged to not wear any red, white, blue or black clothing when afield because red, white and blue are found on a turkey's head and the bird's feathers are mostly black. It's also illegal to stalk turkeys or turkey sounds.

To make turkey hunting both safe and enjoyable, review the turkey hunting safety tips listed on page 52.

For more of the Game Commission visit www.pgc.state.pa.us

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Joining Forces

The Humane Society of the United States and the Fund for Animals merged forces. According to a report by Scripps Howard News Service, the merger resulted in a mega-anti-hunting group with available funds in excess of $95 million and the stated goal of ending hunting and trapping. The new group has launched the Animal Protection Litigation section, a new legal department, to challenge sportsmen in the courts and has announced it will also form a new legislative arm.

Shotgunning For Deer

When it comes to firearms, eight states limit deer hunters to shotguns or muzzleloaders. Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island allow buckshot or slugs; Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Ohio allow only slugs.

Michigan

A hunter has been confirmed as becoming infected with bovine TB through a cut on his hand when he cleaned a deer he had killed in Alcona County in October 2004. The man was treated and is expected to fully recover. It is extremely rare to get the disease through cutaneous transmission.

England

Late last year the House of Commons rammed a bill through Parliament to ban hunting with hounds by invoking the rarely used Parliament Act. The Parliament Act allowed the House of Commons to override the dissenting vote of the House of Lords. Hunt supporters have now taken their fight to the courts.

North Dakota

Hunters took nearly 600,000 pheasants in 2003 — the highest harvest in more than 50 years.

Ontario

Hunting on high-fenced operations was recently banned in this province. The regulation change does not affect animals raised as farmed animals for meat and other products. Ontario joins Canadian provinces British Columbia and Manitoba, as well as Montana in the U.S., in prohibiting commercial hunting of captive wildlife.

California

The U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance rallied hunters and shooters to help defeat three separate anti-gun and anti-hunting bills in 2004. Assembly Bill 992 would have forced hunters and shooters to pay for the actions of criminals. It called for a 10 cent tax on every piece of ammunition sold in-state to provide financial compensation to victims of illegal firearm activity. Assembly Bill 2858 would have imposed an ammunition tax and a tax on handguns. Similar to AB 992, the taxes would have paid into a fund to reimburse victims of illegal activity. California Senate Bill 1152 would have required firearm owners to register and provide a thumbprint when purchasing ammunition. An amendment exempted licensed hunters from the thumbprint requirement, but they would still have had to register ammunition purchases. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill after alerts from the Alliance led sportsmen to contact his office.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

We can appreciate both painting and drawing and film and digital photography, as long as we know the proper place of each.

Picture Imperfect?

"FILM IS DEAD." That's what photography magazines said when digital cameras became the image-making tool of choice and digital files became the publishing world's primary format for receiving and using photographs.

Nowadays, photography pundits who made that declaration and danced gleefully, if figuratively, around film's grave are backing off. Film is not dead, they tell us now. Don't look for those rolls of edge-punched celluloid to disappear any time soon. Film has and will have its place, in certain applications and in certain circles. Sure, digital is a versatile tool for the photography business and an exciting option for the craft, but it's not an instant replacement for the tried-and-true standard of film.

As a longtime film user, I was still reeling from having to go from a fully manual camera, which I understood top to bottom, to the conundrum of computer-chip-driven electronic units, when digital hit. Having more money than I want to admit wrapped up in my film cameras, I was reluctant to embrace digital. I argued that I was doing fine with film, so why change?

But I had argued that I was doing fine with my recurve bow, too, and my .30-30 with open sights, so why go to a compound bow and a .30-06 with a 4-12x scope? When I went to the wheeled bow and the more modern rifle, I answered my own question: "Easier, better, more accurate." Even I could gush the reasons why I had made the switch. Yet while I talked, I couldn't help casting a wistful look back. The same held true in my photography when I went digital.

In both cases, hunting and photography, had I left something behind when I went forward technologically? Had I really gone forward at all, or had I moved, instead, a step to the side, to a different but parallel track? Could I have a foot on both pathways, or had I reached a fork that would take me down a one-way street?

Call me a dinosaur, but I still like to get slides or processed film and prints back from the photo store. I like the tactile sense of them. I have only to use my eye and my hand to see the fully developed result of my earlier shutter click. I don't need electricity generated in some far-off location to show me my photo; I don't have to rely on magical-seeming boxes on my desktop, with tentacles of wires and screens that light up, to display my photos; I don't have to worry about system crashes or corrupted programs or computer glitches unknown and unimagined. I just have to hold the slide up to the daylight and look.

I still have my developing trays, packets of chemicals, measuring beakers, thermometers and enlarger from when I developed and printed my own black and white photos. Somehow, exposing the paper under the red safety lights, then slipping the blank sheet into the developing liquid and seeing the picture emerge is as natural a process as a bud unfurling and spreading its petals to the sun. To end the process, after I passed the paper through the stop-bath and fixer, I would turn on the overhead light and hold the still-dripping newborn photo in my hands.

Digital photography will always seem cold, because I can't put my hands into the computer and get my pictures. Digital feels like just another layer between what I photographed and me, between what's artificial and what's real. But then, at so many levels of interacting with the natural world, some "thing" intervenes.

Not surprisingly, to me hunting games on computers seem to be as far removed from a true outdoor hunting experience as digital photography is from looking at something eye-to-eye. It sounds oxymoronic when a friend tells me that his new computer hunting game is a lot like the actual thing — you have to search around awhile and may not see any game or you might spook it, "and you even hear the gobbler *putt-putt-putt* when it runs off. It's hard."

Hard? Sitting on a soft cushion, moving just one finger and the eyes, watching unreal images in an unreal place, and you're bragging about how close to "real hunting" that is? It's about as close as the pixel displays of my digital photos are to the in-the-feather, hot-blooded, sharp-spurred turkey that they represent. I can no longer say that I "caught" the gobbler on film.

And what of film? Even that standby gets in the way of true visual experience. Shooting film is like using the technology of today's standard hunting equipment. We employ both without thinking how highly technical they are. Scope lenses, for example, are ground with surgical precision to be distortion-free and layered with treatments to make the view ultra-bright. As for the business

Bob Steiner



THIS COOPER'S HAWK was not "captured" on film, but as thousands of tiny squares — the pixels of a digital camera image. How does digital photography compare to a fine art painting as a way of experiencing wildlife? About like a computer hunting game compares to going afield with a flintlock, some say.

part of the hunting arm, we have grown accustomed to the finely machined barrel and action, the stock that is often a synthetic material or so polymer impregnated and multicolored as to hardly resemble the tree it came from.

Modern bows have wheels, cams, shock absorbers and cables. Like the guns, they work and they are highly efficient. But is efficiency all we're aiming at?

Some think not. I believe that's why many archers who followed the route the whole way to pulleys and wheels are now stepping back onto the side trail of the recurve or the longbow. They are buying these more basic bows off the shelf or, increasingly, from custom makers, of selected woods that reveal in grain and natural hue the identity of their origin tree.

On the firearm side, it's been long years since the flintlock was the latest in vogue, yet many hunters cherish their annual return to days gone by, with factory replicas or craftsmen's recreations of historic blackpowder arms. They say these provide a dimension to the hunt that they found lacking with modern rifles.

In the visual arts, no one would say that cameras, even film cameras, have killed off painting and drawing as ways for people to interpret the world, filtering it through themselves. Photography is one thing, but, ah, art is on a plane all its own. No photograph has the literal depth of color of an oil painting. The kind caress of the brush stroke, the swashbuckling boldness of the palette knife, the delicate tracery of pen and ink, how could film or computer file dare to compare?

They don't need to, just stand to the side and co-exist. Modern firearms and bows are on their own pathway, while primitive arms are trodding another. As we appreciate both painting and drawing and film and digital photography, so we who enjoy hunting can have a good time with flintlocks and longbows, high-powered rifles and scopes, and even the fun of ersatz hunting on computers, when we know the proper place of each.

I don't intend to take my hunting back another step, to true hands-on. I don't plan to wrestle down a bear or tackle a deer or catch a squirrel by the tail, even if it was legal. But I do sidestep quite often in the way I interact with wildlife. I make the leap to the byway of watching wildlife and archiving for the future what I saw. That's the path of photography, a road that has bumps all its own. □

Turkey Hunting Safety Tips

Positively identify your target before pulling the trigger.
Make your position known to other hunters.
Never stalk a turkey or turkey sound.
Assume every noise and movement is another hunter.
While calling, select a natural barrier to protect your back.
Shout "Stop" to alert approaching hunters.
Eliminate red, white, blue and black from your clothing.
Preselect a zone of fire.
Never carry decoys through the woods in your hands; use a vest or bag.
Fluorescent orange: While moving, hunters are required to wear at least 100 square inches on the head, visible 360 degrees. And although the safety color is not required at stationary calling locations, it's strongly recommended.

State Game Lands 302, along the border of Washington and Greene counties, in southwestern Pennsylvania, is renowned for its diversity of plants and birds.

Return to Enlow Fork

WHEN I paid a visit to Enlow Fork (SGL 302) I never expected to be conducting a choir of American toads. After all, this game lands in southwest Pennsylvania, along the border of Washington and Greene counties, is better known for its incredible diversity of plants and birds. Yet there I was, on the first day of May, sitting on a log beside the Enlow Fork of Wheeling Creek, surrounded by singing toads.

Instead of facing away from the shoreline, as they usually do, to trill their advertisement calls to perspective mates, these male toads faced me. With each long, musical trill, a toad inflated his front vocal pouch, looking like he was blowing a large greenish bubble. But it was the harmonizing of their trills that reminded me of a choir.

As a devoted wood frog courtship observer for many years, I had never detected any difference in pitch when they emitted their duck like, quacking advertising calls. Yet the American toads were trilling on different pitches. Mesmerized by their singing, seemingly just for me, I listened awestruck until they swam off. Later I learned, from Lang Elliott's excellent *The Calls of Frogs and Toads*, that my ears hadn't deceived me. "Each male in a chorus sings at a slightly different pitch (1500-2000 Hz)," Elliott writes. "Males alternate and overlap their calls in a pleasing manner."

Upon our arrival at Enlow Fork that May day, we were amazed by the number of toads singing, mating and laying eggs. Long, double strands of black eggs clogged mud puddles. Along the edge of the slow-moving stream, many toads were locked in amplexus, a mating



embrace in which the male clasps the female around her chest with his front legs while she extrudes eggs that he fertilizes as she lays them.

But enough about toads, we had come to see the birds and wildflowers that this narrow, remote valley tucked between the hills of southwestern Pennsylvania is known for. As we pulled into the parking lot at noon, members of the Three Rivers Birding Club, and some turkey hunters, were pulling out, but not before we heard and then saw a singing white-eyed vireo.

Unlike the monotonous sound-alike songs of most vireos, the white-eyed vireo song is a unique "chick-a-per-weeoo-chick" according to the late Roger Tory Peterson. The bird can also be distinguished from other vireos by its yellow spectacles around its startling white eyes.

The only singing white-eyed vireo I had previously seen in the state was in Delaware County, at White Clay Creek State Park. White-eyed vireos breed primarily, and irregularly, in the southern part of Pennsylvania, and today seem to be most common in the southwestern counties.

That was not always the case. Back in 1940, W.E.C. Todd, in his *Birds of Western Pennsylvania*, wrote that white-eyed vireos were rare in the western part of the state. However, since the annual Breeding Bird Survey began in 1966, the most white-eyed vireos in Pennsylvania have been counted in the southwestern counties.

We continued to stand in the parking lot, listening for birds, and even though it was midday, which is usually not a good time for songbirds, on that warm, humid day they remained active and vocal. We quickly heard a Baltimore oriole, blue-gray gnatcatcher, yellow warbler, wood thrush, scarlet tanager, Louisiana waterthrush and, most exciting of all, another sought-after, more southern species, the yellow-throated warbler.

Since the mid-1970s, yellow-throated warblers have greatly expanded their range in Pennsylvania, particularly in the southwest. Most nests have been built high in either sycamore or white pine trees.

Since the mid-1970s, yellow-throated warblers have greatly expanded their range in Pennsylvania, particularly in the southwest. Long time resident birder Ralph Bell first recorded them in Greene County in 1971.

They continued their movement northward during the next two decades, reaching Lycoming County in 1988. Most yellow-throated warbler nests have been built high in either sycamore or white pine trees. In fact, the subspecies *Dendroica dominica albinora*, which is the dominant breeding subspecies in most of Pennsylvania, is often called the sycamore warbler

Judging from the many sycamore trees at Enlow Fork, this handsome, gray-backed warbler with a black eye mask, white eyebrow stripe, and brilliant yellow throat has found ideal nesting habitat.

Our next southern bird species sang from the top of a flowering apple tree at the edge of a field — a striking chestnut-breasted, black-bodied orchard oriole. This species is most common in the southwest and southeast corners of the state. At Enlow Fork, I saw several orchard orioles, and although they are not as "flashy" as Baltimore orioles, they appear so rarely on our mountain that I was pleased to see them at Enlow Fork.

I had hardly recovered from the excitement of observing orchard orioles when I heard and then saw a singing blue-winged warbler. A bird of brushy edge habitat, it is

most common in western and eastern Pennsylvania, but still rare in the ridge and valley and high plateau sections of central Pennsylvania. Its "blue" wings are more gray than blue, but its white wing bars, yellow face and underparts, and black line through its eyes are distinctive field marks. Still, it is not nearly as lovely as its close relative, the golden-winged warbler. Both species like the same habitat but, unfortunately, where the two species overlap, the blue-winged is more competitive, so as blue-wings have expanded their range, golden-wings have dwindled.



Altogether I identified 31 species of birds at Enlow Fork, even though I was thoroughly distracted, not only by the American toads, but also by the bewildering numbers and species of wildflowers. At last, on this, my third visit to Enlow Fork, I saw the wildflower it is renowned for, the blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia verna*). Primarily a plant of the central and southern states, in Pennsylvania this wildflower grows only in the southwestern portion of the state. This delicate, bi-colored flower has two white upper lobes and three rich violet-blue lower ones. Stunning carpets of blue-eyed Mary cover moist meadows and woods and "her praises . . . are loudly buzzed by myriads of bees that are her most devoted lovers," Neltje Blanchan wrote back in 1916. We, too, heard the steady drone of wild bees and bumblebees coming from the beds of blue-eyed Mary.Three shades of dwarf larkspur (*Delphinium tricorne*) — blue, violet and white — grew amid the drifts of blue-eyed Mary, along with wild geranium. To see blue-eyed Mary would have been reward enough for me, but that day and the following one, when we joined members of the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society for more botanizing, we identified many more wildflower species. We were led by Ralph Mumma, a wonderfully enthusiastic elder who has survived two heart attacks but was still eager to be out and looking for wildflowers in his favorite part of the state.

Both days we walked the gated road and detoured over the "hogback" that nourishes, in its narrow band of woods, an astounding diversity of wildflowers, including early ragwort, mayapple, sessile or toadshade trillium, twinleaf, Virginia bluebell, blue cohosh, trout-lily, cut-leaved and two-leaved toothworts, and Greek valerian, also called spreading Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*). Clusters of blue-violet, bell-shaped flowers waved from the top of the stems of Greek valerian, but many of the other wildflower species on the hogback were early bloomers and had faded or were finished flowering for the year. So, too, were the squirrel corn, Dutchman's breeches, white and red trilliums, bloodroot and wild ginger in the woods beside the trail. Still, we knew them all by their distinctive leaves.

Blue and purple continued to be the predominant colors of the day: wild blue phlox, bluets, dame's rocket and wild bergamot also blossomed at Enlow Fork. But the deep scarlet petals of fire pink and the drooping red and gold flowers of columbine added still more color to the wildflower extravaganza. Altogether, we found 84 wildflower species, including the endangered in Pennsylvania Nuttall's hedge-nettle, *Stachys nuttallii*, formerly known as Riddell's hedge-nettle, *S.cordata*, which grows on the moist, rocky slopes above the floodplain. This member of the Mint family has six pale rose-purple flowers, but doesn't bloom until June.

Several western and southern tree species also grow at Enlow Fork and most were in flower. The loveliest were the rose-purple blossoms of redbud beside the trail. Redbud is abundant in the southern portion of the state, growing preferentially in limestone soil such as that at Enlow Fork.

Ohio buckeye, also known as fetid or stinking buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*), bore showy, bell-shaped, yellow flowers. Its alternate names refer to the foul odor of its twigs when they are broken. A small tree, growing no higher than 40 feet, this southern and midwestern species reaches its easternmost limit in western Pennsylvania.

Pawpaw was also in bloom, sporting 3-parted, greenish to purplish-brown blossoms. But it is better known for its elongated, orange-fleshed fruit, beloved of opossums, squirrels, birds, foxes, raccoons, and discerning humans. The alternate names for this southern and midwestern tree — wild banana and custard apple — are attempts to describe its taste and texture, which Charles Fergus says, in his excellent *Trees of Pennsylvania*, has "a consistency like custard or cooked sweet potato, and when I slurped it up, it tasted . . . like banana, but with a hint of something exotic — mango maybe — and an overlying pleasant sweetness." Found only in the southern third of Pennsylvania, pawpaw grows in moist stream valleys.

We didn't see the fourth southern Pennsylvania tree species, also a lover of moist, limestone soils, the yellow or chinquapin oak, but it too lives at Enlow Fork. So do two interesting ferns — the walking and bulblet — that we also didn't see. And who knows how many more birds and wildflowers we missed. That's why we are returning to the fabulous Enlow Fork Natural Area this spring. Maybe the toads will sing for me again. □

Books in Brief

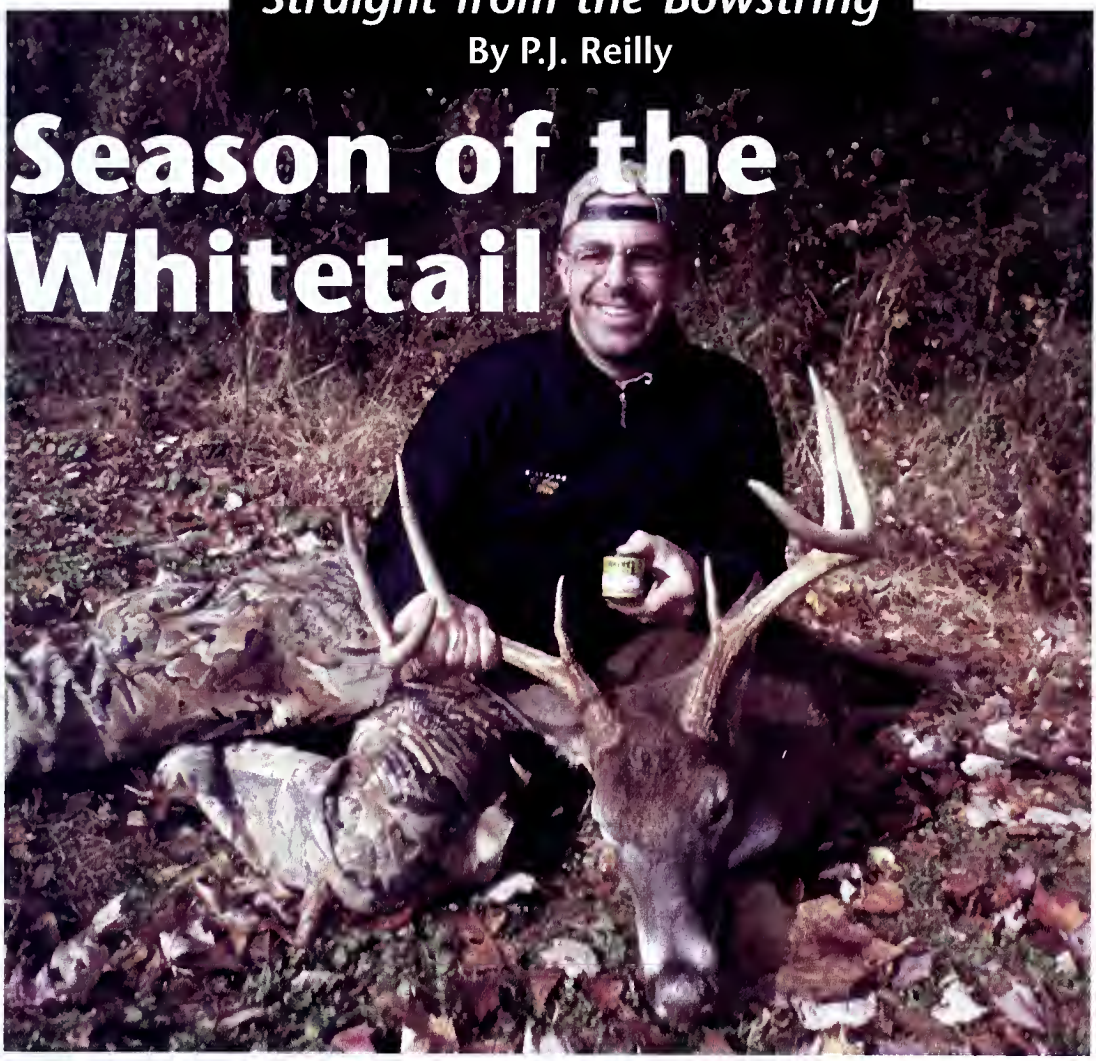
(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Appalachian Winter, by Marcia Bonta, University of Pittsburgh Press, Eureka Building, 5th Floor, 3400 Forbes Ave.,Pittsburgh, PA 15260, 412-383-2456, press@pitt.edu, 248 pp., softcover, $19.95. This book completes a series of four Appalachian seasons recorded on the author's 650 acres atop the mountains of west-central Pennsylavania. As you read each daily entry, you'll join Bonta on wilderness explorations, interlaced with natural history, and journey with her through places like First Field, Spruce Grove, Sapsucker Ridge Trail and Alan's Bench. You'll experience transformations in the mountain's inhabitants, both human and wild, as the season progresses from December and January through February and March. And you'll glimps the natural world through the wonder-filled eyes of Bonta's 5-year-old granddaughter, Eva. An illuminating read sure to inspire you to venture out into the snowy woods for some exploration of your own. Other books in the series are: *Appalachian Spring*, 1988; *Appalachia Autumn*, 1991 and *Appalachian Summer*, 1996.

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

Season of the Whitetail



OPENING WEEK. The mid-October lull. The rut. The late season. These are the four distinct segments of Pennsylvania's annual, 9-week archery deer season. After only a few years, every serious bowhunter comes to know this breakdown.

In the days leading up to opening week, every bowhunter worth his or her weight in broadheads is bursting with anticipation. It's been a long year waiting for this time to arrive. There's been lots of scouting time spent in the woods, and many hours spent on the practice range honing shooting skills. Finally, it's game time. Bucks run together in bachelor groups, are relaxed and are unpressured. During the opening week, anything can happen.

After the excitement of opening week wears off, a sense of hopelessness often sets in. This is the mid-October lull. All the deer that were highly visible before the season opened, and even during that first week, seem to have vanished. Days on stand go by without so much as a single deer sighting. The deer, it seems, have left the woods.

Then comes the day when deer start showing up again, and not just any deer, but bucks. The rut stirs deer out of their mid-October holes and they once again become visible. More importantly, big bucks that you've previously seen only on summertime spotlight runs start to show up in the woods during daylight hours, and they'll respond eagerly to scents and calls.



DRESSING warm is the key to being able to stay on stand for several hours during the late season.

This is the part of the season that is most anticipated by bowhunters.

After Christmas, the days are among the shortest of the year. The air is cold. The woods are bare. Welcome to the late season, where preseason dreams of bagging the big one run smack into the reality that any deer will do to fill the freezer.

Each of the four PA archery seasons has its unique challenges that bowhunters have to deal with. Bowhunt long enough, and you'll take deer in each season. You just have to learn to change your tactics to match the conditions of each segment.

Opening Week

In my group of bowhunting buddies, the commonly held belief is that your best bet for taking a trophy buck is either during the first week of the season or during the rut. Opening week is when the deer are less wary of hunters than they'll be at any other time of the season. They haven't been bothered by hunters in nine months and have fallen into fairly predictable patterns. Presumably, you have spent some time during the weeks leading up to the season learning those patterns and locating prime ambush sites on the deer travel routes to and from feeding and bedding areas. All you need to do to hunt deer during opening week is get in your treestand or ground blind and wait.

More often than not, it's going to be fairly warm, too. Because of that, deer will be most active early and late in the day. Don't bother sitting in your stand past 10 a.m. on morning hunts, nor should you climb into your stand before 3 p.m. on evening hunts. All you will do is wear down your ability to sit on stand for long periods, which you'll need in November.

The heat also should prompt you to take extra care to mask your scent. Being scent-free is important no matter when you bow hunt for deer, but it's most critical during opening week, when you're sure to do a lot of sweating. Wear carbon-lined clothing, spray yourself all over with a scent eliminator, and spray some cover scent, such as doe or raccoon urine, on your boots.

It won't take long for the deer in your hunting area, especially the mature bucks, to figure out the hunt is on for another year. And when they do figure that out, count on them to be moving only in the dark. Big bucks are particularly notorious for this behavior.

When we talk about opening week, we're talking about opening day through the following Saturday. That's your window for trying to zero in on that trophy buck you've been watching all summer. If you don't get him by the second Saturday, your next best opportunity is going to come during the November rut.

Mid-October Lull

Following the first week of the season, there's a period of two to three weeks when the hunting is tough. It's still going to be fairly warm, compared to November. The full moon will likely set in at some point. Deer have become wary of hunters. The rut hasn't begun to kick in yet. All of these factors converge at once to make it seem like the deer in your hunting area have vanished. Rest assured, they haven't. They've just gone nocturnal.

To be quite honest, I do not bowhunt aggressively during the mid-October lull. I pick and choose my hunting days, and weather is my main guide. What I look for is the first day after a fairly bad and prolonged weather system has passed. If I run into two or three days in a row of rain, high winds or heat, followed by a calm, cool day, I'm definitely going to be on stand on that calm, cool day. A change for the better in October weather seems to be just what the doctor ordered to get some deer on their feet during daylight hours.

Back in 1998, rain fell and the wind blew hard for four days at the end of the second week of October. I remember sitting at my computer the last day of the storm and noticed the weather forecast called for the following day to be clear, calm and about 10 degrees cooler than it had been. I called my buddy and told him I was going hunting the next day, and that I just knew I was going to bag a buck. Sure enough, shortly after 8 a.m. I arrowed a nice 8-point.

If you hunt farm country, be on the lookout for crop-harvesting activity in mid-October, particularly corn. During the early part of the archery season, one of the first places deer go to hide when they realize they're being hunted is into fields of standing corn. Hardly anything ever bothers them there. When the combines or Amish mule teams dive into that corn and start chopping, any deer that had been hiding in the field will have to move out. And the first place they'll go is the nearest woodlot. That's where you want to be.

The Rut

At some point late in either the third or last week of October, deer activity during daylight hours will start to pick up. It will increase through the second week of November, when the first leg of the archery season comes to a close. You'll see bucks out roaming around with their noses to the ground or making rubs and scrapes. If you see a doe come bolting past you for no apparent reason, pay attention. A buck is likely coming your way.

This is the rut, that magical time of year when bucks throw all caution to the wind in the pursuit of love. Break out some buck lure and lay a trail through the woods as you walk to your stand. A roaming buck is likely to catch the scent and follow the trail right into your shooting lane.

Use deer calls, both buck grunts and doe bleats. Deer are quite vocal, particularly during the rut, and lovesick bucks often will come running to your calls. During the 2003 season, I was sitting in my treestand one morning during the first week of November, working my can-style doe-in-estrus call. This is a mouth-free call that you simply turn upside down to produce a long, crying call that sounds like a sheep.

I had been working this call every 15 minutes for about an hour when I heard something approaching from behind my stand. I turned around and spotted a big 8-point walking toward me at a fast pace. Its head was up, and it was looking all around, obviously searching for the doe it thought it had heard. When the buck was 20 yards from my tree, I released an arrow that found its mark.

During the rut, bucks will roam the woods all day long in search of receptive does. As a hunter, you need to be in your stand as much as possible. This is the time of year for stints on stand from dawn to dusk.

The Late Season

The day after Christmas — unless it's a Sunday — marks the beginning of the late archery deer season. The woods are bare. The deer that survived the firearms season are extremely skittish. And, of course, it's usually downright cold.

Don't worry about getting to your stand before daylight. You're better off heading out at noon or 1 p.m. and sitting until quitting time. Deer don't like to be up and about at the coldest time of day any more than we do. Once the sun has had a chance to warm

things up a bit, the deer will be on the move.

Look for deer in the nastiest, thickest cover you can find, especially on south-facing slopes. This is the safest, warmest place in the woods for deer.

If you haven't yet filled your buck tag, don't bet the farm on tagging one in the late season. Bucks that have survived to this point are real escape artists. In the late season you're more likely to cross paths with a doe. And assuming you have an antlerless tag for the area in which you're hunting, don't be ashamed of taking a nice doe. They taste just as good as bucks.

For me, the allure of the late season is it's the last chance to sit in a deer stand until next fall. And, for me, sitting in a deer stand beats sitting in front of the television any day. I don't want the hunting year to be over, so I squeeze every second out of it that I can.

Bowhunters are blessed here in Pennsylvania to have nine weeks of deer hunting. Learn to recognize and adapt to the four seasons of archery season, and over the years, you'll be able to count your blessings by counting the number of tags you'll fill. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Who Am I?

I am North America's smallest CLNOAF ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.
8 6

I am often seen in farm country perched on TILYUIT ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ poles.
4

I am primarily TROSILAY ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.
3 5

I am known to ROVEH ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ over fields, watching for ECMI ___ ___ ___ ___.
11 2

I nest in tree cavities, like old PEEDCOWKOR ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ holes.
10 7 1

I am currently in rapid decline in PA and rural landowners are being asked to erect GETNISN EXOBS ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ to help me.
9

I AM A ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___;
1 2 3 4 5 2 6

ALSO CALLED A ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.
3 7 8 5 5 9 10 11 8 10 1

TO BUILD YOUR OWN kestrel nesting box, purchase *Woodcrafting for Wildlife* from the Outdoor Shop at www.pgc.state.pa.us or phone 1-888-888-3459. The book includes plans for many wildlife woodcrafts and costs $6 plus $1.25 shipping and handling.

answers on p. 63

Watching Westerns on TV sparked the shooting interest for many of us gun nuts. Now, with these relatively new shooting events, pretending to be Matt Dillon is not just a fantasy.

Cowboy Action & "Buffalo" Shoots

MOST OF US who are around the half-century mark vividly recall the many TV Westerns of the 1950s and '60s: the "Lone Ranger," "Cheyenne," "Bronco Lane," "Have Gun Will Travel" and "Wyatt Earp," just to name a few. Even now, I sometimes find an old rerun of "The Rifleman," with Chuck Connors, on some cable channel, and my wife knows that she has to almost resort to dynamite to move me from the tube.

Much to my surprise there are more than 50,000 men and women who share the same fondness for that era gone by, but they go one step further by participating in a couple of fairly new shooting sports called cowboy action shooting and buffalo shoots.



COWBOY ACTION SHOOTER with an original Colt Lightning pump rifle and Colt Single Action Army revolver.

Within the past 15 or so years, these have become the fastest growing competitive shooting sports in the U.S., simply because they're a lot of fun. The types of firearms used, the audio/visual effects during the competition, the camaraderie, as well as the apparel worn, make these shooting events very appealing.

To begin with, the apparel should be reminiscent of the late 1860s to the early 1900s. The minimum is a cowboy hat, jeans, boots (not necessarily cowboy style), and long sleeve shirts. At the other extreme are those who pay strict attention to being most authentic, with spurs, chaps, leather and sombreros, even a western drawl. You'd swear that many of the competitors in these events have jumped right out of the late 1800s.

One of the rules that make it a little more fun is that the competitors are encouraged to take on a Western alias: Buzzard Pete, Dangerous Dan, Rattlesnake Rene (women compete, too), and once you have your alias, you're on to the next step.

Firearms consist of rifles, handguns and shotguns reminiscent of that era. Pis-

tols can be replicas or the real McCoys of single actions such as the Colt S. A. Army, Remington 1875 and 1890, as well as the Schofield. Because there weren't adjustable sights on working pistols before the turn of the century, only fixed sights are allowed in this form of competition.

Rifles for cowboy action shooting are lever action originals or replicas of the Henry, Winchester models 66, 73, 92 and 94, the Marlin Model 94, as well as the Colt Lightning pump rifle and Spencer. The shotguns are side-by-side hammered or hammerless, a copy of the Winchester 1886 lever or the Model 97 pump.





The ammunition is lead only (no jacketed bullets) because all-lead projectiles splatter upon impact with steel targets. A minimum of 32-caliber is required, which includes .32 H&R Mag., .32 S&W (Long), .38 S&W, .38 Long, .38 Special, .357 Mag, .38-40 Win, .44 Russian, .44 Special, .44-40 Win, .45 Long Colt and .45 Schofield.

Using rifles and pistols chambered for the same ammunition is recommended, for the sake of logistics and convenience, and because of the relatively short ranges they're shot at. Shotgun ammo can be 12- or 20-gauge, loaded with number 4 shot or smaller.

The ammunition can be either handloaded or factory issue made specifically for cowboy action shooting. As of now, handloaded ammunition can be loaded light enough to just knock down the targets. There has been a bit of controversy over this, because those who are purists believe that only "full house" loads should be allowed, because the lighter loaded ammunition allows faster recoil recovery and, therefore, has an advantage in the time aspect of the competition.

When competing, two handguns, one rifle and one shotgun are usually used in the same string of shots at a variety of steel reactionary targets (falling or moving) in the form of snakes, rabbits, coyotes, vultures, bandits, poker chips or playing cards. Target sizes vary from 6 to 60 inches, and the distances run from 5 to 7 yards for pistols, 10 to 30 yards for rifles and 10 yards for shotguns. Scoring is a combination of number of hits in a certain amount of time, and hits are obvious and instantaneous, due to the sound and target movement. The shooting range is often a replica of an old Western town, including storefronts, outhouses, buggies, corrals and trains. There may even be simulated horseback shooting. The interesting part, though, is that each and every competitive event is run on a different theme. Shooting sequences can be made up from scenarios of Western movies, or created from the imagination of those hosting the event.





REPLICA guns used in cowboy action shooting and buffalo shoots. Marlin Model 94 lever action, Schofield and Ruger single action revolvers and a Sharps Model 74.

Safety, of course, is the prime concern. There are three range officers who keep an eye on all that's going on. One oversees the loading table, another watches at the shooting stations and a third keeps an eye on participants waiting to step up to the firing line. All participants and spectators are required to wear eye and ear protection.



COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING participants are scored not only on number of hits but also the time element.

The buffalo shoots are pretty much the same flavor, except that participants use bigger bore rifles to reach out and touch steel targets from 100 to 1000 yards. Some shoots don't have the luxury of ranges more than 200 yards, so smaller size targets are made to simulate the correct size at the longer distances.

Rifles used in these shoots are re productions of the classic single-shots, such as Sharps models 74, 75 and 78, and Borchardts, Winchester Model 1885, Stevens 44½, Remington Rolling Blocks and Ballards, as well as lever actions, such as the Winchester models 1876 or 1886, or the Marlin Model 93. Sights can include open, tang or the Vernier for the rear, and post, blade or globe style for the front. Scopes of that era are even allowed, such as copies of the Malcom, Stevens and Winchester A5.

These firearms are chambered in the old black powder cartridges, such as the .32-40, .38-55, .40-65, .44-77, .45-70, .45-120 and even the big .50-100, just to name a few. Some are even chambered for what we would think to be a little more modern, such as the .30-30, .32 Special and .30-40 Krag. Because these were developed prior to 1900, they are allowed. Some shoots are black powder only and others welcome smokeless powder loads, but the bullets must be lead cast only (again, no jacketed bullets).

Watching some of those old, big caliber charcoal burners go off and hammer a downrange target is really something to see, and unless you're awfully hard of hearing, there's no mistake in knowing when a shooter has scored.

Check out these websites for replica firearms used in Cowboy Action shooting, or just to see some cool guns:
www.henryrepeating.com
www.navyarms.com
www.uberti.com
www.ruger.com

Competitive events may include as few as 20 participants and last about six hours to several hundred shooters participating in a 3-day event, to 25,000 at the "End of the Trail" event held in New Mexico that lasts more than a week. These shoots are not just about the competition; they're also social events. Even if you're just a spectator, all you have to do is ask any of the competitors one question and you'll probably gather a small crowd telling you more than you expected and probably welcoming you to give it a try. A good website to check out is the Single Action Shooting Society at www.sassnet.com. Not only does it have a lot of information on this great form of shooting, but you can also locate clubs in your area where you can go see if this is something you may want to try. □

Fun Game answers:
falcon, utility, solitary, hover, mice, woodpecker, nesting boxes.

KESTREL/SPARROW HAWK

A Species of Faith

AN ODD TREE inhabits the southern half of the Keystone State, growing on dry uplands in the Ridge and Valley region and on South Mountain. We don't often think of green Pennsylvania as dry, but consider the rocky spine of a ridge on a hot summer day. Vultures tip across the sky. A red-eyed vireo chants. A lizard basks on a rock, and a bobcat lies panting in a cleft between boulders. A short, thick-limbed tree grows among the jumbled rocks; its sparse crown is studded with prickly cones so large and spiny that they look like medieval weapons. In the baking heat, the cones' scales dry out and open a bit farther. From behind a scale on one cone, a winged seed falls. It flutters down, slanting away on the breeze.

The tree is a Table Mountain pine (*Pinus pungens*). Its range takes in parts of eight Appalachian states from Pennsylvania south to Georgia and west to Tennessee. The pioneering French botanist André Michaux named it after Tablerock Mountain in North Carolina, where he first encountered it in the late 1700s.



Table Mountain pine is well adapted to its parched environment. It loves fire. The tree's thick bark protects its inner tissues from damage caused by flames and high temperatures. If a fire sweeps over a mountain, killing competing trees such as chestnut oaks and red maples, and scorching away the leaf duff covering the forest floor, Table Mountain pine seeds itself onto the newly scoured sites. The tree produces "serotinous" cones: their scales, sealed by pitch, open after exposure to high temperatures such as those from fires. The cones also open on summer days when temperatures soar and a hot wind blows.

The partially opened cones provide food for wildlife. Nuthatches, chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers work the seeds free from behind their armored scales. Wild turkeys scratch beneath the trees. The red crossbill is a northern bird that sometimes winters in the Appalachians; during years when other conifers' seed crops fail, crossbills may subsist almost entirely on seeds of Table Mountain pine.

Table Mountain pine has long followed a cycle of expansion and decline. The trees cling to their rocky eminences; drought grips the land; fire caused by lightning or humans denudes the terrain; and the pines release their seeds to fill the openings. After the lumber industry ravaged Pennsylvania's mountains in the late 1800s and early 1900s, fires fueled by logging debris burned over many square miles. Table Mountain pine responded, perhaps becoming more abundant than it ever had been in the past. When state agencies bought the logged-over land, they encouraged new forests to grow, in part by preventing fires. Gradually, because they were not suppressed by periodic wildfires, slower-growing hardwoods overtopped the pines and began shading them out. Today, ecologists recommend that forest managers use both high- and low-intensity burns to restore and maintain Table Mountain pine and other fire-adapted plants. Table Mountain pine is nowhere common, but it remains a signature tree of the dry uplands. It hangs on in its rocky haunts, waiting for fire and drought — indeed, a strange species of faith.

Chuck Fergus

New Patches

Two new Game Commission patches are now available. One is the second in a series of Game News Field Note patches designed by, of course, Nick Rosato, and the other, the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife series patch.

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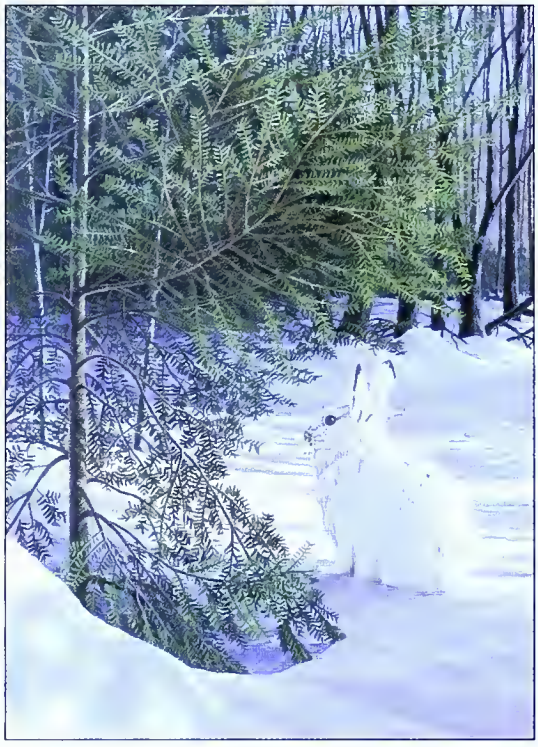
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HEMLOCK HARE, by Patrick Sharbaugh is the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. The snowshoe hare frequents the swampland, overgrown with hemlock, rhododendron, willows and alders common in the Pocono Region of northeastern Pennsylvania. The snowshoe brings a little of the Far North right here to the Keystone State.

PRINTS are on acid-free paper; image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is $125, plus s&h (for framing add $97.50, plus s&h). Embroidered, 4-inch patches are $5.66, plus s&h. PA residents add 6% state sales tax.



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A Tribute to My Father

By Harry Hindmarsh

As young as I can remember, Dad always talked about the time I'd be old enough to hunt and fish . . .

I JUST CELEBRATED my 20th year as a deer hunter, and I consider myself lucky to have never missed a season. For me, every year the Thanksgiving holiday is the start of something special; it's another chance to spend time afield with my father, Bert R. Hindmarsh.

Born and raised in Hastings, he was a country boy from the start. As a child, my father spent countless hours in the field with his dad, hunting deer, turkeys, rabbits and birds. It was hard to hide this country boy's athletic talents, though, and it was only a matter of time before he was lured away as a football star for the college of William and Mary. After earning his undergraduate and master's degrees, a return to Hastings was not in the cards.

Instead, he married Connie and they moved to Norfolk, VA, to start their careers in administration for the public school system. As time passed, Dad always returned home for hunting. In all his years, he never missed the PA hunting season. During those years my two sisters where born, making my parents a very happy couple. For my dad, life was almost complete. More time went by, and God blessed them with me.

As young as I can remember, Dad always talked about the time I'd be old enough to hunt and fish. I remember watching him leave to go hunting and thinking, someday I'm going to be just like Dad.

As I grew older, I kept my word. Whenever the chance to hunt or fish with my father came, I was there. Every summer we spent as much time as we could, going home to the Pennsylvania mountains to shoot, hunt and fish. I'll never forget those times on the farm.

The best memories are of the times Dad and I hunted together. As I've grown to be more accomplished, I often reflect on my first whitetail hunt. It was opening day 1983 and it was cold — too cold for me as a 13-year-old. Of course, I didn't have the ideal clothes for that weather. I was wearing my grandfather's wool coat, which was too big. My toes were freezing and my fingers were numb. I wanted to quit, but Dad said, "You've got to stick it out. Days like today are when you see the big ones."

Dad and I were positioned under a giant hemlock tree. He was scanning down the hill and I was watching the top. It was fairly thick, but we had great views along some well traveled paths Dad had scouted. I remember it was 10 a.m., and I couldn't believe I had made it that long. Just then, four deer came up from the bottom on my right and went over the hill. I didn't think Dad had seen them, so I whispered, "Dad, a group of deer just came up. I think the third one was a buck."



HARRY HINDMARSH and his father BERT R. HINDMARSH with the 9-point buck Harry took on opening day of 2003 in Jefferson County.

He leaned over and said, "Okay, just sit tight and watch where they left. Sometimes they get spooked and come back on the same path. Be ready."

He was right; 20 minutes later, the same group of four came back over the top on my right and headed our way. "Here they come. Here they come." I whispered with excitement. "Dad, the third one is a buck."

With the calmness of a tenured hunter, Dad replied, "Okay, buddy, shoot him."

Being 13, freezing beyond the point of comfort and not really being sure I understood how to shoot the deer, I kept waiting.

I remember Dad saying, "What are your waiting for?"

Truth is, I didn't know how to tell him that I had so many clothes on I couldn't lift up the gun.

Before I could react, Dad pulled up his 300 Savage and shot, but the deer kept moving. Another shot and the deer were running below us. Then something strange happened.

The does ran out of sight down below, but the buck turned and headed straight for Dad and me. Calmly, Dad raised up as the deer jogged closer and took one last shot. The buck fell into a small gully. As Dad and I approached the big buck, Dad asked if I'd like to finish him off.

I said, "Yes," and looking down, pulled up my 32 Winchester Special and pulled the trigger.

Then the tears came. I remember crying like crazy. Not because I had just killed a deer, but because I was so excited that all I could do was cry. Like a true champ, Dad was very clam and explained this was part of the kill. "As time goes on," he said, "this will be easier for you."

How right he was.

The other thing I really remember about that time was Dad removing his jacket to field-dress the deer. "How in the world can you take off your jacket?" I said. "It's freezing."

He explained that he wasn't cold, because of the adrenaline rush, and that he didn't want to get blood on his jacket.

The tears turned to smiles as we celebrated a successful harvest. This buck

was huge — really huge. I didn't realize it at the time, but Dad mentioned that people hunt their entire lives and never see such a buck. He also said that I should take a good look at this buck, because I may never see one that size again. Those words still echo loudly in my mind, because I now know how right he was. I was very spoiled that day. I saw plenty of deer and watched as my Dad got his biggest buck to date. All I remember after that was how much I wanted to get back in the woods and hunt.

Twenty years have passed. Together, we go off to spend time with our best friends, Bill and Shawn Wilson, Bill Ochs' family, Steve Merryman, Wayne and Ray. I was extremely concerned this past year, however, because my father fell ill a week before the season. I was afraid he might not be able to hunt, but as it turned out, he not only came along, but also shared my greatest hunt to date.

To me, every buck is a trophy, no matter the size. I've been blessed to harvest many bucks, but none of them were much to write home about — until this particular year.

It was Sunday before opening day, and we had a pretty good turnout for camp. For my 20th anniversary of hunting, I bought several new hunting accessories, and I thought I'd show them to the guys. Well, it was the hit of the day. Everyone laughed at me, saying I'd bought every new gadget in the store. They were right. They laughed and mentioned how I had been sold a bill of goods.

Steve, one of my best buddies said, "If you don't get a big buck tomorrow, we'll never let you live this down."

I shared the laughs with them, knowing it was all in good fun. We had our dinner and off to bed we went. By morning, I was the first one dressed and the first one in the field. I love opening day. For me, it's really the best time. I love seeing deer move and, as weird as it sounds, I love to hear the shots in the distance.

This day was slow — very slow. I saw a spike and a little 4-pointer around 11 o'clock. My dad was down the path a couple hundred yards, and around 3 o'clock he radioed to tell me he was tired and wanted to rest up a bit. I hoped he would spook some deer on his walk back to camp, but no such luck. The rest of the day went even slower. I looked at my watch around 4:45 and was thinking that another opening day had come and gone.

Just then, a fawn appeared. I was so happy to see her. She just stood there about 50 yards below me to the left. She stayed for what seemed like an hour but was only seconds. She was spooked when a big doe came running up from the bottom. They met up and stopped, but something wasn't right. At that point, the big doe started looking like a pretty attractive contender to fill my doe tag. I pulled up my 30-30 and had her in my scope, but then the little fawn snorted and they both spooked. They started down the hill in a jaunt, but definitely not a run.

Then, out of nowhere, behind the fawn, appeared the biggest buck I'd ever seen except for Dad's. I saw his legs through the brush and remember thinking I usually see deer bodies there. He must be a big boy. He came into full view and his rack was awesome. After seeing those little bucks earlier in the day, I was shocked to see antlers that I didn't need binoculars to see. I pulled up and took the shot.

I knew I hit him hard, because I saw him take cover in a bush at the bottom of the hill. I took off after him and was shocked when I walked up on him. He was positioned away from me, and when I walked up on him, he lifted his head. I saw the rack come out around his ears and quickly ended his life.

Then it happened again: I cried like a baby. They were certainly tears of joy. Starting out worrying if my father would be able to make this trip and now knowing I got

this big ol' boy made it all complete. Not to mention, I wanted Steve to eat his words.

I sat there a few minutes and thanked God for this opportunity. I really felt blessed. It was getting dark now and I still had work to do. I called Dad on my walkie-talkie and said, "What are you doing?"

He replied, "We're all sitting around the dinner table waiting for you so we can eat."

I told them I had shot a big 9-pointer and needed help getting him out. They brought the truck down, thinking I was joking with them, but when they got there, the jokes stopped and disbelief kicked in.

Dad was the first to grab me and give me a hug. "I'm proud of ya, buddy," the words he uses often to describe me. I felt great.

Steve's response was, "Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm coming to camp next year with all new gear like Harry. I said you better get the biggest buck and you did."

It was truly a great year. My father knows how much hunting means to me. He also knows how much he means to me. I wanted to thank him in a way that would truly surprise him. For as long as I remember, we've received *Game News* and Dad reads them cover to cover. This time, I wanted him to read about some hunts special to him. I named my son Hunter as a tribute to the man that made me who I am today.

Thanks, Dad. I'm looking forward to a lifetime of great hunting together. ☐

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Law enforcement officers learn how to more effectively recognize waterfowl violations. . .

Into the Mind of a Violator

By Lori D. Richardson
PGC Education Specialist

IT'S 4 A.M. I yawn, stretch sluggishly, squinting at the light, and shuffle toward the mound of clothes I'd laid out the night before. Today is the third day of a Waterfowl Enforcement Training course being taken by 28 WCOs and deputies, and I'll be meeting them at the crack of dawn at Haldeman's Island, where they'll be putting their new skills to the test.

Haldeman's Island, SGL 290, is just north of Harrisburg, where the Juniata enters the Susquehanna. Previously owned by Pennsy Supply and Pennsylvania Power & Light Co., the old machinery is long gone, and where there were once gaping holes left from gravel mining there are now waterfowl management ponds of varying depths and sizes. So managed, Haldeman's Island is an excellent stopover for ducks making their way to more northern nesting grounds, and is also good nesting territory for those that choose to stay. Only 30 minutes from the Ross Leffler School of Conservation (RLSC), it is an excellent location for this particular training exercise.

The 18-hour course is designed for officers wanting to learn more about waterfowl and the enforcement of state and federal waterfowl regulations. The training, sponsored by COPA (Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association), will be the basis of a new, 5-day course that will replace the half-day of waterfowl enforcement training previously offered, for the next class of trainees to attend RLSC. This course will also be the foundation of a 3-day in-service training option for current WCOs and deputies.

Lt. Llyod Ingerson and Sgt. Jack Bailey from the Maryland Natural Resources Police conducted the course, and having lead more than 300 similar programs for officials in Maryland, Virginia, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and now, Pennsylvania, they know what they're doing. In the field of conservation enforcement for more than 20 years each, they conduct these training sessions because they have a passion for teaching officers about waterfowl enforcement.

PGC officers Chad Eyler, Jason DeCoskey, Linda Swank, Chuck Lincoln and Bradley Krieder assisted with the instruction, as they want to help other WCOs and deputies become more proficient in this facet of wildlife law enforcement. "Most officers are very comfortable dealing with





Deputy Conservation Officers JEFFREY SMITH, Butler County, and CHRISTOPHER GRECCO, Clearfield County, (left) along with deputies ALAN POWERS, Centre County, and DAVID FIDLER, Schuylkill County, (below) practice identifying ducks in the wild at Haldeman's Island.

deer and turkey hunting situations" Eyler says, "but many are not as familiar with waterfowl or waterfowl hunting. This course will give them the knowledge and confidence to more effectively recognize waterfowl related violations and enforce waterfowl regulations."

Deputy WCO Bill O'Donnell of Schuylkill County was anxious to learn more about waterfowl enforcement when he signed up for the course. He said he was learning a lot about identifying illegal baiting of waterfowl. "It's a lot different than deer, bear or turkey baiting because it's often underwater, you can't see it."

About a third of the participants are Wildlife Conservation Officers, the others are deputies. They hail from all parts of the state and were told to bring hip boots or waders, binoculars, spotting scopes or any of the like, along with plenty of warm clothes.

After checking in at the RLSC, the students went to work Friday evening with a pretest and information on the natural history and identifying characteristics of puddle ducks — mallards and wood ducks, for example. Saturday they learned waterfowl regulations and the natural history and identification of diving ducks, such as scaup and redheads, before heading out to Haldeman's Island for a lesson on baiting techniques commonly used by violators. When I caught up with them on Sunday, they were practicing field ID and learning practical enforcement techniques such as how to check for bait.

Like skinning a cat, there are many ways to ID a duck. In the wild, waterfowl can be identified by their size, color patterns, wingbeats, flying patterns and behaviors. For instance: the wingspan of the tundra swan is much larger than the snowgoose's; a male ringneck duck sports a white ring on his face around the base of his bill; woodducks "whistle" when they fly; teal are small and fly quickly; puddle ducks feed in shallow water and diving ducks feed in deep water, where



Assistant instructor WCO CHAD EYLER of York County, demonstrates one way to check for suspected bait.

they'll often submerge completely.

Ducks that have been killed can be a little trickier to ID, because hunters are required to keep only the head or one feathered, attached wing per bird, until the birds are home and processed. In this case, birds can be identified only by their head or bill or their wing feathers. The greater scaup, for instance, has more white on its primary feathers than the lesser scaup; a mallard has a white stripe in the speculum of the wing on the secondary feathers where the black duck does not; and a redhead has a short multi-colored bill where the canvasback has a large, black sloping bill. Identifying the species is important, because bag limits vary for different species of waterfowl.

One of the most interesting parts of the training is the glimpse into the minds and methods of violators. Officers learned about floating nets and sunken traps constructed to capture (ensnare) dozens of diving ducks at a time, and fish hooks on weighted lines and conibear traps on sunken poles designed to catch ducks one at a time. Students were shown how violators go about baiting, checking and collecting their "harvest," what traps violators use in different situations, the different materials used to build the devices, and the methods violators use to try and outwit enforcement officers.

Participants learned how to test shot in the field, to find out what kind it is. Lead shot is not legal, of course, but today there are ten or more types of legal nontoxic shot available for waterfowl hunting. Any type of shot that sticks to a magnet is legal, but each will react differently when a pellet is pinched in a pair of pliers. Some alloys won't show marks from the pliers while others will squish easily and split on the edges. The wads of the cartridges can also help determine the type of load. Steel shot has a heavy wad to protect the gun barrel from scoring; tungsten/iron has a 6-petal, 1-piece wad, while the soft but illegal lead shot shells have thin-walled cushioned wads.

Officers learned what to keep their eyes peeled for when approaching suspected violators. Which hand do they offer their license with and which pocket do they reach into for their shells? Is that gas can in the boat suitable for the kind of fuel the boat uses or has it been modified to hide ducks? Is that contraption in the bottom of the boat used to anchor fishing nets or slyly sink ducks beyond the bag limit? What color are the corncobs in the field being hunted? Are those ducks feeding in a natural pattern or are they making a beeline straight to a baited area?

The answers to those questions could make the difference between a cordial encounter with a legal hunter and the confirmed suspicions of an observant enforcement officer.

They learned techniques for interviewing violators into giving up evidence. "It's

not what you say but how you say it," says Ingerson.

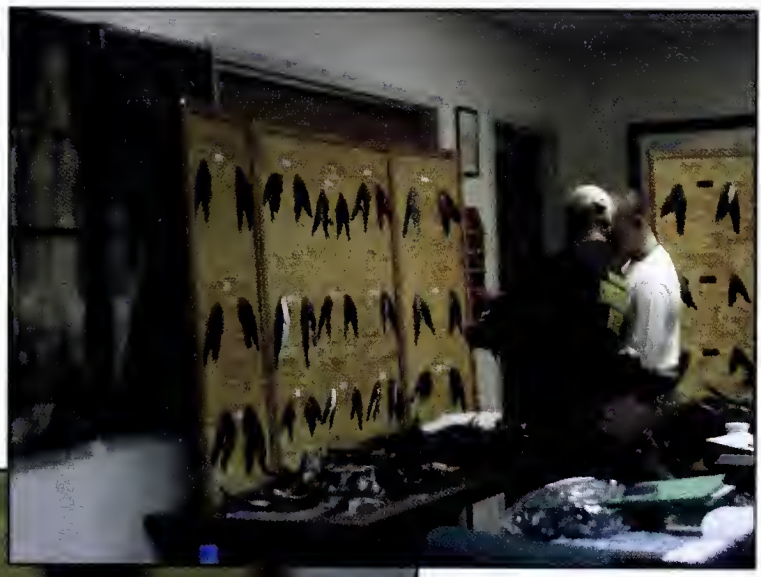
For instance, instead of saying, "I know you shot at least two birds over the limit and you've got them hidden in your decoys," try "I've been watching you and your buddies all morning. Now I need you to show me where all the ducks are."

Is that gas can in the boat suitable for the kind of fuel the boat uses or has it been modified to hide ducks? Is that contraption in the bottom of the boat used to anchor fishing nets or slyly sink ducks beyond the bag limit? What color are the corncobs in the field?

One of Ingerson's tips – "Always let them think that you know more than you think you know. If they start leading you to evidence, and it's not where you thought it was stashed, follow them anyway, the violation may be much larger than you originally anticipated."

At the end of the day, before taking their final test, the officers had a chance to ask questions and review their notes, classroom mounts and a seemingly endless array of duck wings available for study. Sgt. Bailey gave everyone his number and encouraged the students to call him anytime they had questions. Then during the exam, his phone rang. He answered with polished authority, only to find that it was a crafty trainee in the next room looking for help on the exam.

At the end of the day, each participant received a certificate for successfully completing the course. They'd crammed five days worth of training into two and a half, and though they were going home a little tired, I believe they each have a new appreciation for waterfowl and waterfowl enforcement. I know I do. □





Above, Forest County DWCO LAWRENCE HERGENROEDER, (left) and WCO TIMOTHY WENRICH, Montgomery County, study a wingboard before their exam. Left, an officer practices his identification techniques on this canvasback wing.

Meyersdale Woman is Proof . . .

Hunting isn't Just a Man's Sport

by Jackie Coughenour

DEER HUNTING is a sport that many men look forward to every year, especially in rural areas like the mountains of Somerset County. But for Bernice Christner of Meyersdale, it's not just a man's sport. She has been hunting deer for much of her 76 years, bagging a buck, a doe or both just about every year for more than 60 years.

Her love for hunting came from her dad, the late Albert Meyers of Meyersdale. He was an avid hunter, passing that trait onto his daughter.

Bernice remembers the first time her dad asked if she wanted to walk along with him while hunting, she was in high school (not being sure which year). She does remember that he didn't need to ask twice; her answer came almost without thought, yes!

Bernice was one of five kids: four girls and a boy. She and her sisters took piano lessons. She remembers her mom sternly correcting her when she made a mistake playing. The piano was fine and dandy for her sisters, but for her, she'd rather be hunting.

Always being the tomboy of the bunch, Bernice was dad's best buddy. She was always helping him with something: the milking, in the shop, or just about any other chore. Her job during the summer was to pluck the wild garlic and mustard from the pasture. If the cows were to eat either, the milk would have a bad flavor. Deer hunting just gave her another chance to spend time with her dad.

It would've been natural for her older brother to be the one wanting to tag along on dad's hunting adventures, but he just didn't seem to enjoy it as much as Bernice.

Bernice says her mother never really approved of her hunting. "It's no place for a woman to be," her mother would say. There were often times when her mom would give her dad a lot of static about the subject. That didn't seem to matter; she always got to go along anyway.

Missing school to go hunting was not allowed, so they had only Saturdays to spend in the field.

Walking along while dad hunted was fun, the only thing that could make it better, she felt, would be getting to shoot the gun. After tagging along for a while, her dad asked if she would like to take a

BERNICE carefully aims her prized hunting rifle, a Model 98 .257 Roberts. It was a gift from her father when she was a girl.

shot. Her unhesitant reply — "Sure." Rising to the occasion, Albert bought Bernice a new rifle, the very same rifle she hunts with today. It is a Model 98, .257 Roberts with a scope. It has been well cared for over the years, being cleaned after each time it was used. It still works as well as it did all those years ago.

Her dad's instructions on using the gun were simple. "Stand still, lean on a tree to steady yourself, get the deer in the sights of the scope and shoot." Simple, yes, but with her record of accuracy — effective.

Yet another piece of original hunting equipment she uses today, is the Barlow pocketknife her dad gave her when she received the gun. It has field-dressed all the deer she's shot over the years. She says her dad didn't want to give her a big knife to carry. He was afraid she might get cut or fall with it and hurt herself

Albert and Bernice were always up to the mountain hunting camp before daylight. They would get up at 4 a.m. to milk the cows, so they could start hunting at daybreak. A true hunter would never wait until noon to go out, according to her dad.

Soon after finishing high school, Bernice started working at the shirt factory in Meyersdale. She recalls, just before deer season one year her boss said, "No one is allowed to take off work to go deer hunting on the first day." Bernice reminisced, I stood up right then and there and told him, "I am going to take off. If you want to fire me, do it now." The rest is history. She went hunting and her job was still there when she returned.

Then there was the time she left work at lunchtime (there was no work that afternoon). She rushed off to Allegheny Mountain and spread out her lunch. Just then she saw an 8-point buck, she shot it, field-dressed it, and finished eating her lunch before returning home with her trophy.

The hunting camp that she and her dad hunted from is located in Elk Lick Township of Somerset County and is near the highest point in the state, Mount Davis. Ferris Ringer owned the property when Bernice started hunting there with her dad, and it was eventually passed down to Bernice. She took ownership of the 100-acre hunting camp some time in the early 1960s. What could be more cherished than a piece of property that held so many fond memories of her and her father? This is where she has done much of her deer hunting



Her advice for young girls ... "Get out there and go hunting, you won't be sorry."

over the years. She also hunts Negro Mountain and Allegheny Mountain.

With a background like Bernice's, it's not surprising that she would some day marry someone who also enjoyed hunting as much as she. That man was Glen Suder; they married in 1956. The couple spent much of their time hunting together until his passing in 1991.

She remarried in 1997. You guessed it, to another hunter, Mack Christner of Meyersdale. His wife had passed away also. Mack says, "I grew up on the farm right across the road from Bernice. At that time, I was more interested in her sister." Bernice never had any children, but gained a family when she married Mack who had four children to a previous marriage.

Mack takes hunting seriously, too. He often takes trips to Colorado to hunt mule deer and to Canada to hunt caribou. The hunting site in Canada is so far up in the mountains that it accessible only by plane. Bernice says she would like to go along, but being the only woman in a one room cabin, there wouldn't be much privacy for her or the men.

Bernice and Mack get together with a small group of hunters each year during deer season. They all meet at her hunting cabin and stay there through much of the season. She does the cooking, something she enjoys almost as much as hunting. With only a one-burner potbelly stove to cook on, the fare is usually something simple, such as vegetable soup or stew.

But don't think she spends all day inside cooking. She makes sure to take time to get outside and do her share of hunting, too. She gets out early to hunt, the men stop by occasionally to add wood to the stove and she comes back in around eleven to start lunch.

As if hunting in itself isn't enough of a challenge, it has become more so over the past few years for Bernice. Her knee has been hurting her quite a bit, but that hasn't dampened her spirits about going hunting; she just needs to take along more equipment. Now she must carry her gun, her cane and a chair. She walks a short distance from the truck and sets up her chair, then waits for Mack to drive the deer out to her.

The yearning Bernice has to go hunting since that first trip with her dad has grown with each passing year. In fact, not much gets in the way of her hunting.

Having bypass surgery in October 2002, however, did slow her down temporarily. Not being back on her feet when December and deer season rolled around, she had to sit that one out. But,



BERNICE shows off one of the many trophies displayed in their home.

Bernice's meatloaf recipe was served at the Wild Game Feed held recently at their church.

CARIBOU MEATLOAF

1½ lbs. ground caribou or venison
2 eggs
3/4 cup milk
2/3 cup bread crumbs
2 Tbsp. chopped onions
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. chili powder
dash of pepper

Mix together, form into loaf, bake at 350° for one hour. Then mix the following:
½ cup catsup
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
½ tsp. dry mustard

Coat top of loaf with the mixture and return to oven for another 15 minutes.

after a year of recovery, she was anxiously awaiting the arrival of the 2003 deer season. Not wanting to waste any time, she was up and out of that cabin early the first day, and she shot her buck and was back inside before the noon meal.

Bernice often brings her wild game to the covered dish dinners at the Grace Brethren Church in Meyersdale. This is one area where she has followed in the footsteps of her mother. Her mother cooked the game that she and her dad harvested. Using as much of the meat as possible, not many parts went to waste. Her mother would even fill the heart with stuffing and cook it, too.

Trophies shot by Bernice and Mack line the walls of their Meyersdale home. Among the collection are caribou and mule deer shot by Mack on some of his hunting excursions. He mounts the antlers onto wooden plaques himself, but he has a taxidermist do the head mounts.

She enjoys hunting because she likes the scenic beauty and the quiet atmosphere of the mountains and just being outdoors in the woods to enjoy the animals and flowers in their natural surroundings. She often brings other things home with her besides meat for the table, peppermint, for instance, to make tea.

Her advice to young girls who enjoy spending time with their dads is to get out there and go hunting with them, you won't be sorry.

When someone asked if they'd see her during hunting season this year, she responded by saying, "I hope so. I'm going to take my cane and my chair along with my gun and I'll be there." □

Cover Painting by Stephen Leed

IT'S HARD to describe, but when you hear it you'll be mesmerized — the song of the wood thrush. The first thing that comes to mind for me for some reason when I hear one emanating from my dense mature woodlot is a small mountain stream gently cascading downslope, gurgling as it goes, tumbling into a cool, deep, green pool — it's the tranquility thing, I guess. This small forest dwelling songbird, which somewhat resembles a young robin, is considered by many to be the most melodious of all songbirds.

The Jacklighters

By Steve Hower
Perry County WCO

IN 1895, when the Game Commission was established, one of the first orders of business was to ban jacklighting and other tools and techniques used to take large numbers of game. Unfortunately, jacklighting, so named because the settlers who first engaged in the activity did so by using a torch made from the pitch of the jack pine tree, is still common today. And with automobiles, powerful spotlights and scoped high-powered rifles, it's become easier. Nearly every WCO must deal with jacklighters, and here's one case I became involved in that took us for quite a ride.

1998 was busier than usual, because I was assigned to cover northern Dauphin County along with my western Schuylkill County district. As the year went on, we began to receive quite a few calls about night shooting in one particular area.

"Keystone Boulevard" was the name given to a newly constructed road in western Schuylkill County. It runs parallel to Interstate 81 and was built to accommodate the truck traffic at a warehouse complex being built on Broad Mountain. Prior to development, the area was rugged mountain ground where deer, bear and other wildlife had long been accustomed to little or no human pressure. After the new road had been constructed, a wide berm was seeded with grass, and these long strips of new, nutrient rich vegetation quickly became deer magnets. Perfect for jacklighting.

In November and December Broad Mountain is cold and windy, and it was there, in the cold and darkness, we waited. On some nights the wind blew so hard that our trucks would actually rock back and forth. Although the cold penetrated our vehicles, we waited with windows partway down, to more likely hear any shots. The deputies and I shared many nights there, but by the middle of December, we had to move on, wondering if our luck would ever change. Then, finally, late one night it did.

"I said, 'the shooter's still there'."

I had asked dispatcher Ed Shutter to repeat, because I was still half asleep. It was just after midnight on Sunday morning. Buck season had just ended, and I went to sleep that night, delighted in knowing I had a day off before the antlerless season began. Now, clutching the phone and listening intently, I realized my plans for a quiet day at home were quickly evaporating.

Ed had received a call from the Schuylkill County communications center. A worker at one of the new warehouses had reported seeing a small truck driving slowly down Keystone Boulevard, with one of the two occupants working a spotlight. As he watched, the light illuminated a deer grazing near the roadway. Within seconds, the rifle blast broke the silence. Stunned, the witness watched both men exit the vehicle and quickly load the deer onto the truck. He hurried to a nearby telephone to call 911, to notify the "game wardens." Now, Ed was telling me that the truck was still in the area.

The county dispatcher had also notified the state police, and according to Ed, a unit was on its way. I immediately called Deputy Jeff Rinaldo to assist, and after donning my uniform I began the nearly 20-mile drive to Keystone Boulevard.

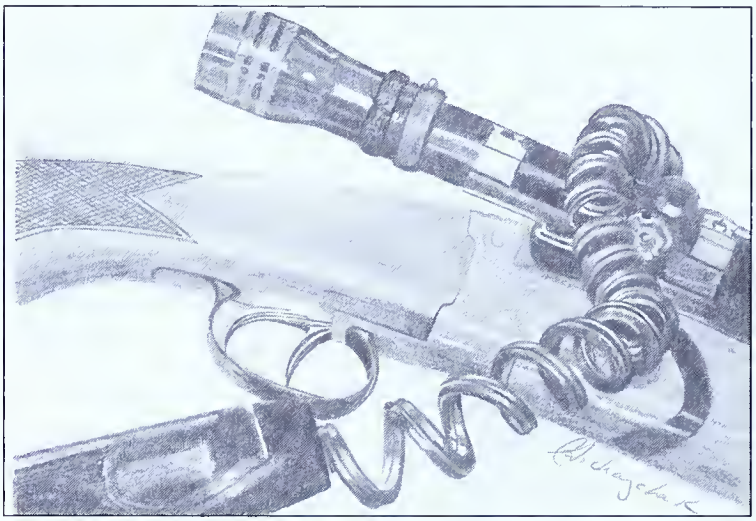
Troopers who had been patrolling nearby arrived before we did. When I got there I found a handcuffed, middle-age man standing behind a small pickup. He had obviously been drinking.

Deputy Rinaldo found fresh blood in


WR7611B

the truck bed, and inside was an unloaded .222/20-gauge. Live .222 rounds and three casings were on the floor; a spotlight was on the seat, still plugged in; and smudges of blood were on the restrained man's trousers. As I collected evidence, Rinaldo, with the witness's help, found where the deer had been shot and dragged to the road. This appeared to be a simple case, but from the beginning we had problems.

Our witness didn't have a clear description of the vehicle and was unable to identify the truck of the person in custody as the one used in the crime. Furthermore, the vehicle was traveling in the opposite direction from where the suspect's truck was now parked. And where was the second person?



The man in custody, "Will," insisted that he knew nothing about a deer being poached. He said he stopped along this isolated roadway to answer a call of nature. As for the fresh blood on his trousers and in his truck, he claimed it came from a deer that had been lawfully killed by an unknown hunter earlier that day, and he, being such a nice guy, helped the hunter transport it.

Will failed a sobriety test, so the troopers took him to the Frackville barracks for booking. I seized the firearm and spotlight and had his pickup impounded before traveling to the barracks to interview him more thoroughly. Once again, he denied any knowledge of a deer. I took a sample of blood from his trousers and explained that I would have the DNA from this sample and from the blood on his truck compared to the blood from where the deer had been killed. He now abruptly remembered that there had been a deer poached, but his involvement was, of course, minimal.

Will, he explained, was in a nearby tavern, drinking with some guy, when this fellow asked Will to help him. Not knowing the man or what he wanted help with, Will agreed to assist, anyway. He said his new friend asked him to follow him to Keystone Boulevard. It was around midnight and Will drove behind the man's red pickup until they reached a place where both could pull over. The man then walked back and asked Will to wait until he returned. Then, according to Will, the man drove off. He returned a short time later and explained that he had just shot a deer and now needed Will to go retrieve it for him. Will drove his truck to where the deer had been killed, dragged the deer to the road and loaded it onto his truck, then delivered it to the shooter. After Will helped him load it in the red truck, the "real" poacher sped away. Will then went back to where the deer had been shot, to rest for a few minutes, and it was at that point, he said, that the State Police showed up.

That explained the blood in his truck and why his vehicle was facing the opposite direction. It also seemed to explain why the deer was nowhere to be found. As for

the gun in his truck, Will said it was in the vehicle because he is a hunter. And the spotlight? He said he had been spotlighting earlier that evening, during legal hours (it's illegal to spotlight during deer season, anyway) and without the gun in the truck.

According to the evidence and his own account, Will had cooperated with another to take a deer unlawfully, a clear game law violation. When I explained the charge against him and he realized that his "just helping some other guy" story wouldn't get him off the hook, he became angry and refused to sign the citation.

I gave him his copy and turned him back over to the troopers. With his truck impounded and a $600 fine, Will was released to his brother around 3 a.m.

It bothered Deputy Rinaldo and me that we had not found the deer, or the second individual the witness had seen. But then, a few days later, we got a call from a concerned sportsman, Alex, who went on to describe Will's activities that night.

According to Alex, Will and another man Alex didn't know, poached the deer from Will's truck. After shooting it, Will and his accomplice hid the deer, planning on getting it later, then went searching for a second deer. Will's friend shot at a second deer, from the passenger side of the vehicle, and was in the woods, looking for it, when the troopers arrived. Near panic, he remained there, lying quietly and watching helplessly while Will was arrested and the vehicle was loaded onto a rollback and taken away. Only then did he leave, walking off the mountain to seek transportation back to his home, somewhere in Dauphin County.

Even more astounding is what Alex said next. After brothers Will and Johnny left the State Police barracks, they retrieved the deer, took it to a remote area in northern Dauphin County and field-dressed it before taking it to one of their homes.

I couldn't believe they would be so brazen. Alex went on to say that Johnny was currently working at a construction site in the Reading area and that his truck, the one used to pick up the deer, may be there now.

Without delay, I drove to where Alex said the deer had been stashed prior to its retrieval. I hoped to find some blood or hair that might support Alex's claim that a freshly killed deer had been hidden there. At the same time I contacted the region office and requested Berks County officers to be sent to examine Johnny's vehicle for similar evidence.

I searched the area Alex had described, but found nothing. Next I went to where Alex said the deer had been field-dressed. On my way, I was notified that Johnny had just been questioned and refused to provide a statement. I had not planned for that. I had intended to only have his vehicle inspected. Now, he was aware of my investigation. And worse, Johnny had gotten a ride to work, so his truck wasn't even at the job site. Johnny told the officers that his truck was parked in front of his house, in Lykens.

I called Deputy Bill Honicker and asked him to continue my search for the entrails while I went to Lykens. Dauphin County deputies Barry Everly and Sean Erdman met me there, but the truck was gone. Johnny's wife explained that her brother-in-law, Will, had, moments before, borrowed Johnny's truck to "run some errands." Obviously, Will had received a call from Johnny. I asked the deputies to stay back, in case Will returned, while I hurried to the car wash in Tower City, a few miles away.

Within minutes Bill radioed to say that he had found the site Alex had described, and that there were deer entrails that appeared to be a few days old. At the car wash, I found wet tire tracks on the blacktop at the exit end of one stall, and at the back of the stall, deer hair and a small chunk of flesh.

After gathering what evidence I could find, I left the car wash and Deputy Everly radioed to say that he and the other officers had found Johnny's truck parked in the neighboring town of Wiconisco.

When I arrived, Johnny was standing on the sidewalk. "What's the problem?" he asked, trying to come across as a law-abiding citizen. His performance was poor. Without responding, I walked over and looked in the bed of his truck. It was almost spotless. Almost.

I found a single deer hair clinging to the inside of the bed. Faced with this evidence, Johnny quickly confessed to retrieving the deer after leaving the State Police barracks. During his confession, Johnny made no mention of the other man Alex had spoken of. Then he added something that peaked my interest. "We went back in there only so Will could show me where the deer was shot," he said.

Now, Johnny no doubt thought I already knew they had returned to where the deer had been shot that night, or he never would have divulged this information. As incredible as it was that the brothers would even go back to retrieve the deer, it was not at all logical for them, after 3 o'clock in the morning, to drive several more miles back Keystone Boulevard, just so Will could show Johnny where he had been caught poaching a few hours earlier. No, the more probable reason they returned was to find Will's partner.

During my interview with Johnny, Will showed up.

"The game's over," I told him. "Now we need the deer."

Will agreed to produce it, and while the deputies accompanied him to his home in Lykens, I issued a citation to Johnny for transporting and possessing an unlawfully taken deer. With Will and Johnny now charged and the deer carcass being recovered, we were not ready to close the investigation, not until we had the other poacher. Regrettably, we had no more leads until, once again, a phone call changed that. A call that actually had come in long before Will poached the deer that cold December night.

Months earlier I got a call about an unlicensed taxidermist operating in the Lykens area. I also received information that this person had killed more than one buck during archery season. I didn't have time to work the case then, but now I did.

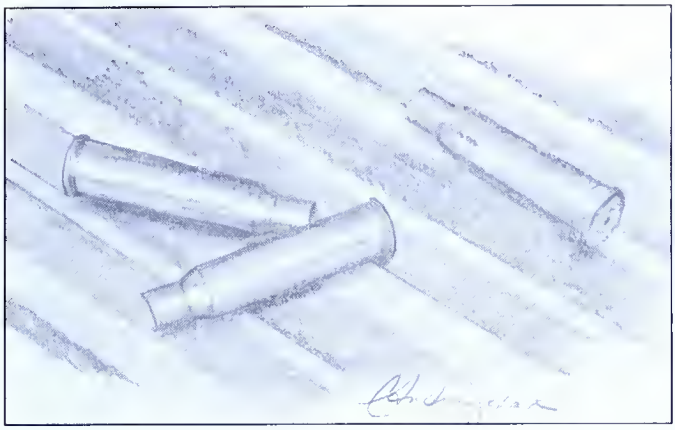
By law, a person must pass a test and then obtain a permit to perform taxidermy in Pennsylvania, even if no fees are charged. I obtained a search warrant for the residence of " Jim." Jim wasn't pleased to see us, but he was cooperative. As I interviewed him, the other officers conducted the search, and they soon brought me several sets of antlers. I asked Jim to identify them, and he told me a man named Will had brought in three of the sets.

Then he went on, "I think you know all about Will, because you're probably the warden that got him in Schuylkill County." When I asked Jim what Will had told him, he told me that Will had related the whole story to him. Jim didn't know who Will's buddy was that night, but when pressed, he said that he had seen him driving in the area recently, in a unique looking truck.

Jim was cited for performing taxidermy without a permit and for killing more than one antlered deer during that archery season — a crime he readily admitted.

One Sunday afternoon a few weeks later, Deputy Troy Lehman called. "Hey, Steve, I think I found it." Troy had decided to cruise through Lykens, hoping to spot the vehicle Jim had described. Checking the registration number, we learned it was registered to a man from Harrisburg, "Seth Newcomer." Expecting a local address, I still had a feeling that I had heard that name before.

A quick search of my files showed that Newcomer had been charged for possessing a loaded firearm in a vehicle on the last Saturday of buck season. I dug out the cita-



tion and saw that deputies Jeff Rinaldo and Frank Yanosky had issued the citation late in the afternoon that day on Broad Mountain. From their notes I could see that the vehicle Newcomer was in at the time was the same truck Troy had just located in Lykens. Jeff and Frank had also noted on the citation that Newcomer had that day a .222/20-gauge. A check of the serial number showed it was the same as the one on the firearm I had seized from Will. Now I had to talk to Newcomer.

Initially evasive, Newcomer eventually admitted to being the man who had been with Will, and he explained that both he and Will were employed by the same company, working on the construction of Keystone Boulevard, and had noticed a lot of deer filtering into the grassy areas along the new road during the evenings.

Newcomer said he had borrowed Will's gun and went hunting on the last Saturday of buck season in Schuylkill County. He was hunting alone and had dozed off in his truck when two Game Commission officers showed up and discovered the loaded firearm in his truck. Then, a few hours later, Newcomer found Will, and after a few more hours and some drinks, Will suggested they go get a deer the easy way. With Will behind the wheel they drove up the mountain and onto the dark stretch of Keystone Boulevard. They went to the end and turned around. As a large doe fed just off the berm, Will reached for his gun, and within seconds the deer was dead and in the back of the truck. Seth said he and Will then quickly drove off and then stashed the deer near the interstate.

Then they drove back to Keystone Boulevard, with Will insisting that Newcomer shoot the next deer. (Newcomer now believed this was Will's way to ensure that he [Newcomer] would not talk later. It didn't work.) They soon located another, and as Will held the spotlight, Newcomer shot. Newcomer then left the truck and entered the woods when a police car pulled up. As the events transpired, Newcomer panicked and ran through the woods until he saw lights in the distance. It was a bar, and he went inside to ask someone to take him to Lykens.

During my interview, Newcomer told me what butcher shop Will normally takes his deer to. Deputy Bill Honicker and I subsequently traveled there. The butcher knew Will; said that he came in regularly, but that he never brought a whole deer carcass in, only the trimmings, and he always ordered bologna. An inspection of the butcher's records disclosed that Will had taken deer meat there several times during the past year.

At the conclusion of this investigation, fines were collected from Will and Johnny, Jim the taxidermist and Newcomer. Additionally, each of these men had has his hunting privileges revoked.

Interestingly, we later learned that Will and Jim had both been charged previously by other WCOs on separate illegal deer cases. Furthermore, Will has been charged since this case for purchasing a hunting license while on revocation. Guess it's a way of life for some folks. I know for certain, it sure keeps us "game wardens" busy. □

Deer

We receive many deer photos, far more than we could ever publish. Seeing hundreds every year, we've come up with a few tips to help you take better photos.

- **Pick a pleasing background. Fill that frame.** We get a lot of photos of deer in the back of pickups and in cluttered garages, neither of which make for pleasing photos. Be sure to nearly fill the frame with the hunter and trophy. Make sure any firearm in photo is pointed in a safe direction.
- **Make sure deer are properly tagged.** By law deer must be tagged in the ear. We get quite a few photos of deer with the tag tied to the antlers. If you're concerned about creating a hole in the ear of a deer you intend to get mounted, use a safety pin to attach tag to ear. For photos taken in the field, hunters should be wearing fluorescent orange. Harvested animals should be displayed respectably.
- **Identify the hunter and everybody else in photo.** Be sure to include where the hunter is from (town), the date the animal was taken, location of kill (county), age of hunter if he or she is a junior license holder, number of points on a buck's rack, and any other details, such as first buck, first deer, etc.

Thanks for sending in photographs of your deer and bears, elk and turkeys. In doing so, you're helping to depict our cherished hunting tradition in the Keystone State. Because of the large number we receive, however, we can't return photos.





JOHN BROUGHER, Harrisburg, above, got this 12-point buck in Dauphin County on last year's opener. WILLIAM SHEDLOCK, Clymer, upper left, got this terrific nontypical trophy in Indiana County.



WILLIAM NEALEN, Mundys Corner, got this albino doe last year in Warren County at 374 yards using a 7mm Imperial Magnum.

Days



ARLENE STADTMILLER, Rural Valley, got this 9-point buck in Armstrong County last year.



MARIE EVERETT, Wilkes-Barre, left, got her 8-point in Bradford County on last year's opening day.



RON EDDY, Towanda, left, bagged this trophy 12-point buck with a 19-inch spread in Bradford County last season.





CLAIR WILLARD EVANS, Home, left, with 70 years of Keystone State hunting licenses. TIM BRION, Easton, above, took this mature doe during the early muzzleloader season in Lehigh County.

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by
Bob Sopchick

Essays from an Easy Chair

RETURNING from a hunting trip, I was surprised to find that the old stuffed chair in my studio had been replaced with a wingback chair.

My wife smoothed the satiny cushion and invited me to sit down. "How do you like it?"

"It's pink," I said.

"Not pink, salmon. It matches the trout in your rug."

I tried to lean back, but the upright design made it difficult to relax. Sinking down in for an afternoon nap would be impossible. My head was bent forward and I felt the muscles along my spine begin to seize and knot. It was a proper chair for a Victorian parlor, to sip tea in, to bedeck with doilies.

I'll admit that my old green chair had seen better days. Pete, when he was but a pup, had pulled the cushion welts loose and ripped the lining from beneath to where it hung like tattered cobwebs. The seat sagged and the upholstery was threadbare in spots, but I liked the hunter green color, and it fit me like a glove.

The new wing chair remained, a formal fixture among the eclectic outdoorsy clutter of the studio. Shunned by me and the dogs, it remained pristine, free of dog hair, crumbs and stains from oily gun rags. I covered it with a camouflage blanket to make it blend in more.

As the weeks passed, I noticed that my productivity had increased by about half a day a week. It was not that I was spending more time in the studio, but less time in the depths of the green chair, watching birds with binoculars, or just daydreaming.

Conversely, I noted that my creativity had begun to wane. I had trouble visualizing solutions, and the notebook in which I outlined new stories and art projects hadn't had any recent entries. A chair by the window, especially a big stuffed chair, is an integral part of the creative process; a station from which to read, reflect and ruminate. The wing chair had to go.

After much searching, I found the perfect chair; an enormous recliner, big enough for me, one dog, and a pillow with soft, padded arms wide enough to set a book on. It is the neutral color of hemlock bark, with a faint checkered pattern that clashes with the rug.



Long ago, I designed a traveling display for a large furnishings company. The theme was classical chairs, functional works of art designed by renowned European architects who had designed furniture before they became architects.

My new chair is the opposite of those timeless creations of bent steel, leather and cane. Wholly American in both size and design, it is by most accounts quite homely, but serves as a cushy nest from which to hatch new ideas, to outline the nuances of a day afield or, as Pete is doing as I write this, nap comfortably.

BACKTAGS

ON A PINE TABLE next to the chair is a ceramic bowl full of odds and ends, including a few old hunting licenses, or backtags, as they're called. One is an antlerless license from 1928, made of tin plate and painted with a dark blue enamel. The white lettering reads *Special Deer License, Display on Middle of Back*. The orange and blue 1947 license has 16 small holes punched along the edge, should the hunter want to sew it directly to his coat. A pale blue license with red numbers is from 1951, the year I was born. The 1981 license is cotton candy pink, and I recall my father making a face as he pinned it to his vest. "A pink license," he said, "Who picked that color?"



In recent years the color has been a metallic greenish-gold. It appears though, that in a few years the traditional backtag will be made obsolete by a new point-of-sale licensing system, with the new license being a wallet-size card that will not have to be displayed.

I'll miss the nostalgic aspect of the old backtag system, but I'm ready for a change.

I won't miss the way the plastic holder slaps up when there's a strong wind at my back, or the grating noise it makes against trees I lean against while on deer stand. If a waterproof coat does not have a tab to pin the holder through, I usually end up poking a hole through the coat with the license holder pin. There's also the aggravation of having it snag on brush. I've found two licenses lost by other hunters, both in thick cover, and lost one of my own. Hunters often leave home, having forgotten their license pinned to another coat.

For many, the act of purchasing a license, placing it in the holder and pinning it to the coat is an annual rite of passage, a ritualistic part of the hunter's year. Young hunters always wear their first license with pride, the license, in effect, becoming a sign showing acceptance of adult responsibilities, of belonging to an ancient order.

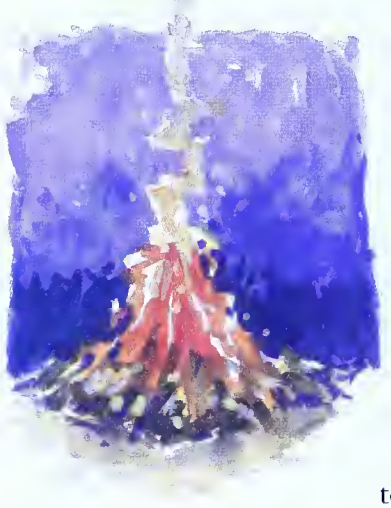
Whether placed on the back or carried in a wallet, a license is more than a legal requisite. By signing the license a hunter pledges to uphold the game laws, to hunt safely and respect the land and landowners. It is also an annual renewal of one's personal contract with nature as a whole, and in particular, the game animals pursued, to hunt them fairly, humanely and ethically.

A hunting license in any form is not a ticket to a venue like a sporting event or amusement park where a certain level of entertainment is expected with the price of admission. In nature, there are never any guarantees. A hunting license allows one to participate in a real life scenario, where the sobering parameters of life and death differentiate it from all other pursuits, transcending in many ways, mere recreation.

PRIMAL LIGHT

LATE AFTERNOON is my favorite time of day. I mark my place in the book with a turkey feather, sit back and watch the slow strobe of the sinking sun through the laddered branches of the pine. Gradually, it is followed by the violet wash of dusk that bleeds down like a stain. This is a magical time, when even on a breezy day, the wind usually ebbs or ceases as if in polite deference to the setting sun. I turn on the table lamp, and the distorted reflections in the window are like distant campfires.

For eons, come evening, people sat by fires. It's possible that sitting in front of a television at night has become a modern substitute. One cannot dwell or reflect in depth upon the images flickering on a screen, though. The images we ponder in campfires are placed there carefully, like select kindling, or pop up from out of nowhere like snapping sparks. As one sits and stares, these mind pictures coalesce, problems are resolved, plans formulated. The day, or even a lifetime, may be put in perspective. Campfires are good for the soul, for the heart, drawing trials and tribulations from one's bones like a damp chill. A sense of well-being always follows a good campfire.



The best campfires are those shared with friends that last into the night, where the ebb and flow and even the volume of the conversation follows the mercurial temperament of the fire. With each new log added, topics change; with the shift of light in the fire ring another person contributes to the telling. It is true theater in the round, the improvisational script beyond the scope of any playwright.

If the stories last until gray light and birdsong, breakfast is the first order of the day, and there is nothing like bubbling eggs and bacon in a big iron skillet, with bread toasted on green sticks, and coffee brewed in a fire blackened pot.

At night, the campfire seems large, a universe unto itself surrounded by the outer dark; but with the swelling light, it shrinks and dies like the evening wind, in deference to the rising sun.

PULSE

FINISHING A PAINTING of a deer at midnight, I look it over from across the room, then turn off all but one studio light. I recline in the chair to read a bit before going to bed. After painting the same image all day it's difficult to just shut my eyes and sleep because that image remains in the mind's eye, and I keep working, instead of resting, much in the way our eyes continue hunting after being on deer stand all day.

The light on the bookcase catches an antler hanging over the edge of a shelf, casting a huge shadow antler across the ceiling. It is very quiet, the only sound the synchronous ticking of the wall clock with the table clock near my drawing board. The shadow and the ticking remind me of an encounter with a buck several years ago, when those same two elements melded into a brief, but unforgettable moment in the November uplands.

It was very cold and I thought about breaking for lunch, but didn't want to get caught off guard by the 8-point buck that I knew was up here. I stood in the windfall, bow in one hand, the other in my jacket pocket holding my pocket watch.

Sun flooded the flat, but it did not seem any warmer than several hours earlier when I

was expecting the buck to come through. I was losing concentration, thinking about the thermos of soup and the sandwiches in my pack. Figuring it to be near lunchtime, I pulled my watch from the pocket and pushed the button that springs the cover. Eleven o-clock, close enough. When I heard a faint rustle behind me, I turned and my heart leapt when I saw the shadow of an antler move on the flat face of a boulder. Glancing quickly to my left I saw the 8-point buck staring at me from less than 10 yards away. His head was held high, dark eyes fixing me in place.



I still had my watch open in my palm. There was no way I could put the watch in my pocket, hook my release to the string, shift a bit more and draw an arrow without the buck taking off. It was a standoff, a staring contest, and he had me cold.

I felt the faint twitch of the sweep hand in my palm, heard the hollow roar of my racing pulse in my ears, pushed hard by the sudden appearance of the deer, now slowing to the cadence of the watch, and I could sense the surge of the buck's dark-meated heart matching my own, his hot blood moving, blood I would let with my arrow given the chance. Neither of us moved and I counted the ticking seconds or heartbeats, I knew not which, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen . . .

He blinked and tucked his ears under his antlers, and I could see spring steel muscles gather and bunch beneath his hide, and when his eyes left mine he wheeled low and away, then sailed across the flat in great bounds, slowing then to a trot, and continued on. I exhaled deeply, snapped the watch shut and slipped it into my pocket. The last I saw of him was the dark blur of his shadow on a bright oak trunk.

I started across the flat, propelled by the pulse of the season, prompted by the heartbeat of the mountain. I could hear the urgent, fleeting seconds of autumn tick by as if it were driven by some great clockwork, a vast mechanism of coiled springs and gears and flywheels, and I could feel the heart of the mountain pulsing beneath the leaf litter, could feel it through lug soles and in my legs, like a distant tremor. I stalked on, in step to that rhythm, and followed the deer.

I MAKE A FINAL ENTRY in my idea notebook, which is bursting with long-range planning, rough sketches for paintings, notes for articles and research to begin. It was only several weeks ago that snowflakes swept wildly past the window, and now petals from the flowering crab tree set loose by a powerful spring wind do the same. The chaff of bursting spring — husk and bud and seed — blows by on this windy day, tics against the glass. Errant raindrops pelt the skylight, and Pete, sitting beside me, watches for squirrels but soon is asleep. This is a fine, comfortable chair, a good, quiet place to think. There are many other places, though, where I can't wait to return, other seats on rocks and stumps and logs from which to sit and watch the perpetual pageantry of Penn's Woods.

Sit, think, feel. Wander first upon, then wonder later about, this cherished land. Then dream the good dreams.

Although I did not realize it then, on that brisk December hunting trip, I was taking the first steps toward being. . .

The Future of Hunting

GREAT PRIZES, from knives to "wild" trips, were in store for the winners of the 2004 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest. Each year the Game Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education Division sponsors the contest for young hunters and trappers ages 12 through 18. The 2004 theme was "Why I'm the future of hunting!"

About 200 young sportsmen and sportswomen submitted essays to judges at Game Commission headquarters in Harrisburg. Winners were announced and the Grand Prize-winning essays in both the Junior and Senior divisions were read at the Commission meeting in January.

Eighteen-year-old Meredith Odato of Landisburg received the Grand Prize in the Senior Division; she won a scholarship to Safari Club International's *American Wilderness Leadership School* in Jackson, Wyoming this summer. In 2003 Odato placed second in the contest .

Also in the Senior Division, Joshua C. Busch age 16 of New Alexandria won a Knight Rifle for his First Place essay. Tim Paoli of Oxford, age 16, won a Magellan GPS in second; Rebecca L. Blakeslee, Lewisberry, age 18, received a Sightron Scope in third; and Brian Pearson of Tyrone, age 17, won a limited edition Buck Knife for his Fourth Place win.

In the Junior Division, 15 year-old Sara L. Morneweck of Fredonia won a scholarship to Safari Club International's *Apprentice Hunter Camp* at the Indianhead Ranch, Del Rio, Texas for her Grand Prize-winning essay. Morneweck also won a First Place for the essay she entered in 2002.

Also in the Junior Division, Amanda L. Mills, age 13, of Tyrone won a Knight Rifle in First Place; Kelsi D. Miller, Berlin, age 14, received a Magellan GPS in Second Place; Zachary J. Kyle, Darlington, age 14, won a Sightron Scope in Third Place and Jordan E. A. Paronish, Felton, age 14, won a limited edition Buck Knife for his Fourth Place essay.

The 2005 contest theme is "How I support wildlife conservation." All youngsters entering the contest will receive a 2005 *Working Together for Wildlife* patch. Prizes include knives, sets of successful hunting books, binoculars, muzzleloaders and trips. A complete list of contest rules, prizes and details can be found in the *2005-06 Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest* available with the purchase of a 2005-06 hunting license, and the agency's website, **www.pgc.state.pa.us**.

The 2004 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest Grand Prize Winning Essays

Why I am the Future of Hunting

On my first hunting excursion with my father, I remember being loosely enveloped by my uncle's old wool jacket. Gloves that were too big warmed my young hands, and I wore my father's hunting pants that had shrunken to almost my size after many years of use. Socks that nearly reached my knees were tucked into my mother's retired hunting boots, and I used a youth model Remington that belonged to my father's old hunting partner. Collectively, these articles of my first morning on the Susquehanna symbolized my hunting heritage, the cherished legacy passing down from the hunters of my past.

My father began to teach me lessons that morning that would continue for many years, allowing me to become a young sportswoman well grounded in hunting ethics and conservation. Years passed before I was able to identify birds in flight, but only one day was needed to teach me to wait patiently for their arrival. Gradually, I learned to visualize the animal that had placed the tracks in the snow before me, and later understood the importance of managing that species. Every outing into the field became a didactic story, one that was shared and referenced endlessly with family and friends. Often, my father would share the memories of his decades in the field, years that define my hunting heritage.

As a student of nature I developed into a young steward, one who encourages ethical management and conservation of wildlife and wild places. Hunting is not only a tradition, but also a remarkable way of life; a life-long process devoted to the establishment of character and knowledge, unique qualities known exclusively to those who hunt. Indisputably, I am the future of hunting because I acquired so much from predecessors, including one vital responsibility: to prolong the legacy of hunting.



Meredith A. Odato
Landisburg,
Age 18

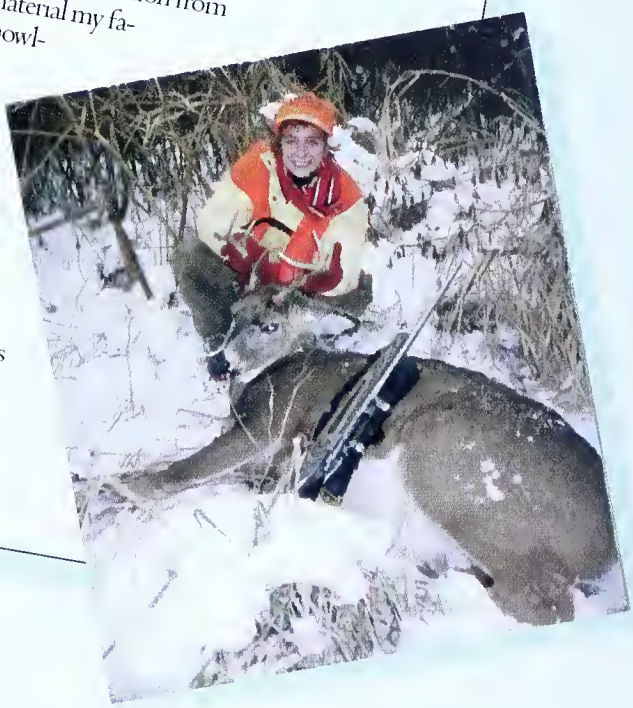
Why I am the Future of Hunting

Hunting is a skill that has been passed down for hundreds of years. Whether it was for food, clothing, or enjoyment, hunting has always been a way to enjoy the outdoors and the company of fellow hunters. Parents have taught their offspring this activity, and these offspring, in return, have taught their young. Through the years, hunting has changed with the advancing technology, but one thing will always remain the same: the necessity to pass down this custom through our generations. I believe I am the future of hunting as I intend to be an ethical hunter and pass down these values to my children, becoming a strong link in the continuance of the hunting tradition.

I can still remember the first time my father took my brothers and me hunting, which was a cold, snowy day in December. The bright sun reflected on the snow and created a glare so strong my eyes became tired from squinting. In recollection, I can remember some of the exact words my father said, ranging from hunting ethics to the importance of the Game Commission's rules and regulations, which were made to insure the safety of both the hunter and the general public. He spoke about having respect for the animal, and always stressed trying to get the quickest and most humane kill possible. I imagine he was using some of the very same information his father told him on his first hunting trip.

In the future, with the information from the hunter safety course, the material my father shared with me, and the knowledge I have and will obtain from my own experiences, I will be able to continue the tradition hunting. I can pass it on to my children, and, hopefully, grandchildren, as well as other youth with non-hunting parents. Although I did not realize it then, on that brisk December hunting trip, I was taking the first steps toward being the future of hunting.

Sara L. Morneweck
Fredonia, Age 15



Socks that nearly reached my knees were tucked into my mother's retired hunting boots, and I used a Remington that belonged to my father's old hunting partner. . .

FIELD NOTES

All But That One

LACKAWANNA — WCOs know just about everything about their deputies. After a battery of tests: physical fitness, criminal background, problem solving and general hunting and trapping knowledge, there's not much more to examine. However, when I sent deputies Ron Kelley and Tad Page up in Page's aircraft, we forgot one last test for Deputy Kelley — an airsickness test.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, TAYLOR

Wish Came True

CLEARFIELD — I checked a hunter who told me that although he now lives in York, he is originally from here. He mentioned that the first thing he looks for in his *Game News* each month [as do most subscribers] is Field Notes, but he seldom sees any from a Clearfield County WCO. Well, Mr. Marshal Shimmel, I'm not the best writer in the world, and they certainly can't print all the Notes submitted, but here's a note from this Clearfield County WCO.

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD

Exposed

I noticed quite a few roadkilled beavers this spring, due to the heavy rainfall that flooded their bank dens and lodges. Unfortunately, the traffic did the rest.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Livin' High on the Hog

ALLEGHENY — WCOs routinely record reproductive data from roadkilled does each spring, and recently I checked an extremely large dead doe from Upper St. Clair. The deer weighed 204 pounds, was 8 or 9 years old, and was carrying three male fawns.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Happy Anniversary

YORK — The York Area Sportsmen For Youth, an organization consisting of members of all the York County sportsmen's clubs and organizations, will be conducting the tenth York County Youth Field Day on June 4.

— WCO CHAD R. EYLER, YORK



Standing Room Only

SNYDER — At a site where I had placed a culvert trap to catch nuisance bears, one night I had a bear in the trap with three others standing on top of it.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE

Make A Difference

JEFFERSON — With all the attention that deer management has been getting lately, a far more serious problem has quietly, but steadily, crept up — a decrease in operating revenue. As costs have increased over the past several years, revenue has not, and now, programs that for years have benefited sportsmen and wildlife are being severely cut or discontinued. It's time once again for sportsmen to put differences aside, look at the big picture, and do the right thing by supporting a license increase.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Great Sport

ERIE — Many farmers tell me that no one comes around to hunt woodchucks anymore. Get out and sharpen your shooting skills and do landowners a service. Remember to wear your fluorescent orange hat, though.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

True Dedication

BEAVER — Jack McMillan, a retired Fish & Boat Commission deputy, has decided to hang up his Hunter-Trapper Education instructor career with the Game Commission. Jack has been a HTE instructor for 33 years, and the past 20 years he has been the county HTE coordinator. On Saturday, March 19, at the Beaver County Sportsmen's Conservation League banquet, Jack was honored by the Sportsmen's League, the Game Commission and, most importantly, by the sportsmen and women of Beaver County. During the past 33 years Jack has helped train more than 33,000 students.

— WCO DOUGLAS CARNEY, BADEN

Good Advice

FRANKLIN — Wildlife pest control agent Charlie Bonsell was recently called to pick up an injured red-tailed hawk. When the resident who called asked what was wrong with it, Charlie pointed out the big smudge on the man's picture window. Apparently, the hawk saw its reflection in the glass and knocked itself senseless for a while. After an overnight stay the hawk was as good as new. Try hanging some sun catchers or closing the drapes to decrease the chance of birds colliding into windows.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Just Never Know

BUCKS — One day I found myself herding a group of cattle that had gotten out of their pasture and were heading for a major road. That was a first for me.

— WCO JOHN M. PAPSON, TRUMBAUERSVILLE



Varied Diet

Many typically think of eagles as fish eaters, but what do they eat in February when everything is frozen? Retired Farm Game Manager Dave Kaulen was traveling near Greenville one winter morning when he noticed a mature bald eagle swoop down and take a rabbit.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

You Might Be a New WCO If . . .

BEDFORD — You are referred to as "the new guy." The most common question you are asked is, "You aren't from around here, are ye?" Your most valued tool is an Atlas, and you still get lost. Finally, if you feel welcomed by the sportsmen and women and look forward to working with them and other conservation agencies and groups, you just might be a new Bedford County WCO.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, EVERETT

Good Advice

VENANGO — Now that chronic wasting disease has been found in a captive herd in New York, we must be more vigilant in making sure that deer being brought into Pennsylvania are disease free. This will require help from everyone. Anyone knowing of live deer being imported into our state should contact the PGC, to make sure the importation is being done legally and safely. Allowing CWD to infect our wild deer would result in damage that we may not be able to overcome.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Magic?

POTTER — One day during March I noticed about 40 deer feeding in a 10-acre field. It just so happened that the deer were on the property of a man who is critical of our deer management program, so I just couldn't resist hearing his explanation. He said the deer were there because he had spread lime on his field. I didn't know lime grew deer, Harry.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, COUDERSPORT



Busy

CLARION — In some counties PennDOT picks up and disposes of roadkills found on state roads, highways and interstates. In an 8-month period last year here, PennDOT disposed of 759 deer, 774 opossums, 698 raccoons, 189 groundhogs, 188 skunks and many other critters.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, CLARION

The More the Merrier

DAUPHIN — HTE Instructor Harold Daub and I were initially a little overwhelmed when 72 students showed up for a class at the Erdman Sportsmen's Club, but we both felt a sense of accomplishment when every one of those new hunters successfully completed the course and received their certificates and patches. We were also impressed by the hospitality of the club members, who donated their time and money to provide free hot lunches for all the students.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN

Help Out

POTTER — If your club or organization is looking for a way to help wildlife, why not volunteer your time to help with habitat improvement projects or donate lime and fertilizer for food plots. Budgetary cutbacks will certainly impact the Game Commission's ability to maintain habitat as the agency would like to in the future. Contact your local region office for more information.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORKS

Good Perspective

LANCASTER — A hunter at a sportsman's show retorted, "What is the Game Commission going to do about retaining youngsters in hunting when there are no deer left for them to shoot?" That question hit me like a lead balloon. I explained that it was not just the Game Commission's responsibility to recruit and retain young hunters. The Game Commission provides opportunities, but it's up to adult hunters to mentor youngsters, and to teach them that hunting is more than killing something. The desire to be outdoors and see its many wonders and sharing it, that is what will retain young hunters. The man agreed and went away with a different attitude.

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

Senseless

We place out a lot of signs to let people know when they are entering a state game lands. These wooden signs, which cost about $50 to make, show the game lands number and acreage. Unfortunately, many of these are disappearing. I believe some decorate college dorm rooms and residential game rooms. Taking these signs is not only illegal, but for all the money we spend replacing them, there is that much less for us to spend for wildlife habitat. If you see any of these signs where they don't belong, please let us know so we can recover them.

— LMO DALE E. HOCKENBERRY, EAST BUTLER

Dangerous Endeavor

While cleaning out wood duck boxes in the Sewickley Creek wetlands, student intern Molly Giles and I noticed one box that had a hole in the roof and was chewed up around the entrance hole. When we opened the box we found the skeleton of a raccoon on top of the nest remains. It appears that the raccoon tried to chew through the entrance hole but failed. It then chewed through a split portion of the roof and gained entry, preyed on the nest, but then became trapped in the box and eventually died. We removed the damaged box, cleaned it out, replaced the roof, filled it with new nesting materials and remounted it in the wetlands. I guess the predator doesn't always win.

— WES Joseph V. Stefko, Greensburg

Better Buck:Doe Ratio

Fulton — During March I picked up 22 roadkilled deer. The interesting part is that 15 were bucks, which indicates that antler restrictions and an ample doe harvest seem to be working.

— WCO Kevin L. Mountz, St. Thomas



What Are the Odds?

In 24 years the only bearded hen turkey I have seen are the one or two taken by hunters that I checked. This past March, though, I noticed a flock of eight hens, and two of them had beards, and they were being courted by two jakes.

— LMO Ed Zindell, Gouldsboro

A Couple Of Prospects?

Adams — On my way to help teach a HTE class I noticed two young boys near the road carrying BB guns. When I asked what they were doing one of them promptly replied that they were shooting at birds. I explained to them that what they were doing was unlawful, and after they left, I thought it was ironic, because the boys were about the same age as most of the students in the class I was on my way to teach.

— WCO D.J. David, East Berlin

Got His Feet Wet

Cumberland — Despite being in my new district for only a short time, I've learned several valuable lessons. First, even though it might get quite warm here in February, the water temperature is still chilly. I've even learned that a "polar bear" club frequents the impoundments on SGL 169. Finally, to avoid being threatened as a subject in a Field Note, try to get yourself unstuck from the muck before calling for help.

— WCO Eric R. Horsh, Newville

Will Take It Anyway

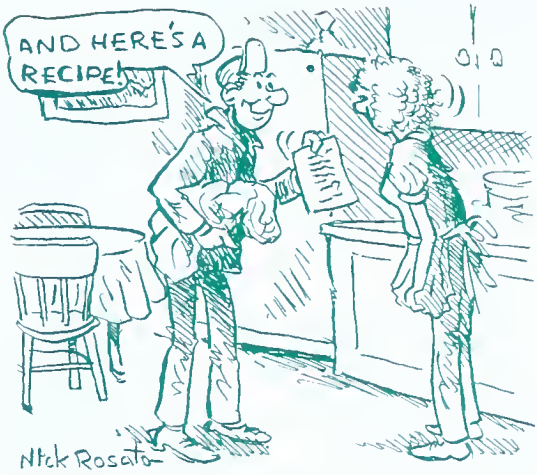
Fayette — I was sitting at a traffic light in downtown Uniontown when a passerby motioned for me to open my window. As the light changed the man called out, "I just wanted to thank you for your help. You don't remember me, but you stocked the creek where I fished with my grandkids last year and we had a great day." As the traffic began to move, I didn't have a chance to inform the gentleman that I was not the waterways conservation officer, so I just smiled and waved. It sure is nice to receive positive feedback from a local sportsman, even if it was intended for someone else. Thanks, Scott!

— WCO Steve Leiendecker, Uniontown

Like Clockwork

Westmoreland — The vultures returned to the area right on time; I saw my first on March 8.

— WCO Rodney Ansell, Mt. Pleasant



PGC Cookbook

SCHUYLKILL — I've been noticing that with the advent of the .17 HMR more sportsmen are hunting groundhogs. Now I think more hunters should try to make better use of these animals. I'm sure there are some good recipes out there for cooking chucks.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Couldn't Stay Away

LACKAWANNA — Archbald Police Officer Michael Petronchak was riding his snowmobile in February when a deer bolted out of the brush and struck the side of his sled. The deer caused no damage to the snowmobile and ran off into the woods. At the end of the day Mike started home when another deer ran into the road and struck his snowmobile on the trailer. The deer was severely injured and damaged the sled and trailer.

— WCO DANIEL FIGURED, OLYPHANT

An Institution

Retired PGC land manger Dick Belding (my father) spent this past winter in Arizona. As soon as he pulled his camper into the campground, the camp host, retired PA state trooper Bill Moran, came over waving his *Game News* and said that I had a Field Note in it. It's amazing how far and wide our *Game News* reaches across the country and around the world. So here you go, Bill, now you're in the magazine.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

"Up Jumped the Devil"

YORK — Those infamous words are from Jim Beard, a retired WCO who was well known for his colorful expressions. It seems one time Jim was hunting ducks when he came across another hunter. The man told Jim that he had shot over the limit and wanted Jim to take some of his ducks before the "game warden" got him. Well, Jim flashed his badge and said, "Up jumped the Devil." That phrase came to mind not long ago, when on a dove hunt, my father and I were in the Cordoba, Argentina, airport and struck up a conversation with another fellow. He told us that dove hunting in South America has gotten so expensive that he doesn't even bother buying a license anymore when he comes down. I shook my head, and two things came to mind: Up jumped the devil, and times are tough when I have to go all the way to Argentina to come up with a Field Note.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION



Up to His Eyeballs

ARMSTRONG — On April 1 I got a call from my WCO saying that he was stuck in the mud. When I neared his location I called him on his cell phone, to make sure this wasn't just an April Fools' Day joke. I soon found him in mud over the vehicle bumper. After getting him out, he sheepishly asked if I was going to spread the word about him being stuck. I promised Barry I'd never tell. Oops.

— DEPUTY MATTHIAS PHEIL, FORD CITY

2005-06 seasons and bags approved

AT ITS APRIL MEETING the Board of Game Commissioners gave final approval to the 2005-06 hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits. Expanded opportunities through DMAP, more bear and elk hunting, new and expanded youth seasons, and a 2-bird spring gobbler limit are just some of the highlights.

Deer seasons and antlerless allocations

For 2005-06, antler restrictions and deer season format is similar to last year, except for expanded antlerless deer hunting in Wildlife Management Unit 5C. Antlerless deer license allocations, however, are substantially lower in many Wildlife Management Units (WMUs).

For the highly urbanized WMUs (WMU 2B, 5C and 5D) the Board approved an antlerless allocation of 159,000, the same as last year. For the remaining WMUs, the antlerless license allocations totaled 720,000, a decrease from last year's 880,000.

Following is a listing of the antlerless deer license allocation by WMU (with last year's allocation in parenthesis): **WMU 1A**, 40,000 (48,000); **WMU 1B**, 27,000 (33,000); **WMU 2A**, 55,000 (55,000); **WMU 2B**, 68,000 (68,000); **WMU 2C**, 53,000 (75,000); **WMU 2D**, 56,000 (58,000); **WMU 2E**, 21,000 (23,000); **WMU 2F**, 30,000 (44,000); **WMU 2G**, 29,000 (52,000); **WMU 3A**, 27,000 (32,000); **WMU 3B**, 41,000 (48,000); **WMU 3C**, 32,000 (37,000); **WMU 3D**, 38,000 (50,000); **WMU 4A**, 35,000 (43,000); **WMU 4B**, 35,000 (49,000); **WMU 4C**, 39,000 (44,000); **WMU 4D**, 40,000 (55,000); **WMU 4E**, 38,000 (38,000); **WMU 5A**, 28,000 (32,000); **WMU 5B**, 56,000 (64,000); **WMU 5C**, 71,000 (71,000); and **WMU 5D**, 20,000 (20,000).

"Our allocations are designed to reduce the harvest while retaining the season structure," said Dr. Christopher Rosenberry, the agency's new Deer Management Section Supervisor. "For most WMUs we are recommending a reduction in allocations, because deer populations have declined in recent years, and we're now at the point where we should assess the results of these reductions. Therefore, the intent of this year's allocation is to stabilize deer populations in most WMUs as we continue assessing our deer populations."

Following is an overview of the adopted seasons.

- A concurrent antlered/antlerless rifle deer season from Nov. 28-Dec. 10. To harvest an antlerless deer, hunters must possess a valid, WMU-specific antlerless deer license for the unit in which they are hunting or a DMAP permit.
- A firearms antlerless deer season from Oct. 20-22, for junior and senior license holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, or Penn-

sylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, who possess the appropriate WMU-specific antlerless deer license or DMAP permit. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach age 65 in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706.



JOHN BRODBECK of East Berlin received the 2004 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year Award. Joining John at the award presentation during the April Commission meeting are Adams County WCO Darren David, left, and Hunter-Trapper Education Division Chief Keith Snyder. An active instructor for 35 years, John is also the HTE coordinator for northern Adams County.

- A muzzleloader season for antlerless deer from Oct.15-22. The flintlock muzzleloader season, Dec. 26-Jan. 14, continues to be an antlered or antlerless season for hunters with flintlock ignition firearms, provided the hunter possesses the appropriate license(s).
- Archery seasons will be Oct. 1-Nov. 12, and Dec. 26-Jan. 14.
- Antlerless deer hunting in WMU 2B will be Dec. 26-Jan.14.
- Antlerless deer hunting in WMUs 5C and 5D will be Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28.

The Board also gave preliminary approval to remove the deadline for hunters to purchase a muzzleloader stamp. There has long been a deadline for purchasing a muzzleloader stamp, and it was initially established to prevent an uncontrolled number and distribution of antlerless deer harvests, but now there is no need to continue this deadline. If approved at the June meeting, this regulation will take effect for the 2005-06 seasons.

The Board retained the use of crossbows statewide for bear and elk and during any of the firearms deer seasons — the regular 2-week concurrent deer season, the early muzzleloader season and the late flintlock season — and in all deer seasons in WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D.

Statewide, hunters using crossbows during the early muzzleloader season or late flintlock season must have a muzzleloader stamp in addition to their general hunting license and appropriate WMU antlerless deer license. Late-season hunters having a muzzleloader stamp, however, but choosing to use a crossbow are permitted to take an antlered deer or an antlerless deer anywhere in the state with their unused antlered deer tag, just like other late-season flintlock hunters.

In WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D, hunters planning to use a crossbow during the archery seasons must purchase an archery stamp in addition to their general hunting license and appropriate WMU antlerless deer license.

Disabled hunters must obtain a per-

manent or temporary disabled hunter permit to use a crossbow during the statewide early archery season outside of WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D.

DMAP expanded to further focus hunter pressure

The Board expanded the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), to better addresses specific deer management objectives within WMUs.

"DMAP helps build better relationships between hunters and landowners," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management director. "By linking landowners and interested hunters, we hope to lessen deer impacts for the landowner and the habitat." As approved, landowners may now give up to two DMAP coupons to a licensed hunter, who will then apply for the DMAP permits.

Also, for 2005-06, the Board expanded the list of eligible landowners for DMAP to include hunting clubs established prior to Jan. 1, 2000, that own in fee title and have provided a club charter and list of current members to the agency. Previously, private hunting clubs were required to own a minimum of 1,000 contiguous acres before being eligible for DMAP. Completed DMAP landowner applications must be submitted to the appropriate region office by July 1.

Upon approval of the application, landowners will receive one coupon for each DMAP permit allocated for their property, and the DMAP permits will be allocated based on one for every five cultivated acres and one for every 50 forested acres. As in the past, landowners may receive more DMAP coupons than the standard rate if they present a deer management plan that is approved by the Game Commission.

DMAP permit allocations are separate from the general antlerless deer license allocations, but follow the same fee schedule ($6 for residents and $26 for nonresidents).

The Board also approved a regulatory measure that makes any DMAP permit holder who fails to complete and submit the mandatory harvest report and survey information from the prior season ineligible for coupons/permits and refunds in the upcoming season.

Bear season extension expanded to additional WMUs

In addition to approving the traditional statewide bear season on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (Nov. 21-23) before Thanksgiving, the Board expanded areas where bear hunting will run concurrent with the first week of the firearms deer season (Nov.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

28-Dec. 3), to include all of WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E — in the northeast and northcentral parts of the state, where human-bear conflicts are the greatest. Last year, the extended bear season included only portions of certain WMUs. This year, to simplify the areas open, the Board included entire WMUs.

The Board also gave final approval to allow deer hunters who obtain permission to hunt on the State Correctional Institution at Rockview in Centre County to hunt for bear during the first week of the rifle deer season, provided they have a valid bear license.



JOHN DZEMYAN, Land Management Group Supervisor in the Northcentral Region, was honored with the Shikar-Safari Wildlife Officer of the year award. With John are Executive Director Vern Ross, left, and Commission President John Riley.

Finally, the Board approved a measure to stop the sale of bear licenses after opening hours of the opening of the 2-week firearms deer season. This change will prohibit the sale of bear licenses after opening hours of the regular firearms deer season on Nov. 28, 2005.

Elk season expanded

In approving the upcoming elk season, the Board added an extra opportunity, a late-September hunt in 2006.

For 2005-06, the Board approved 40 licenses (10 for antlered elk and 30 for antlerless elk) for the Nov. 7-12 season. In addition, at the request of farmers around St. Marys, Elk County, a season will be held September 18-23, 2006, and 10 licenses (2 either sex elk and 8 antlerless elk) for one elk management area. (This September 2006 season was approved at this time, so licenses could be drawn at the September 2005 elk expo.)

"Farmers are suffering severe crop damage, and rather than shoot the elk for crop damage, they would like hunters to have an opportunity to harvest the animals," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Farmers have told us that elk remain in their fields through the fall and do extensive damage to their crops. Only after the crops are harvested do elk leave the area, which is before the regular elk season. This early season will help reduce the damage elk are doing to these farmers' crops, and provide hunters an opportunity to hunt when bull elk are bugling."

In addition, the Game Commission announced that adjustments have been made to the boundaries of the 11 elk management areas. (Details are in the 2005-06 Digest.)

Successful applicants for the November 2005 and the September 2006 hunts will be determined through public drawings scheduled this fall. To accommodate hunter interest in the two elk seasons, the Board gave preliminary approval to allow hunters to apply for a license in each season. However, it is still unlawful to apply for more than one license in each season.

Hunters can apply for the elk seasons through the mail or by going to the agency's webpage (www.pgc.state.pa.us). Hunters may also apply at sports shows and fairs this year. All applications must be accompanied by a nonrefundable $10 application fee.

Two-bird spring gobbler limit approved

The Board approved the creation of a wild turkey license that will allow hunters to take a second spring gobbler in the 2006 season. Fees for the license are $21 for residents and $41 for nonresidents.

Applications may be submitted to the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters via the Internet or by mail (application is in the Digest). Hunters will be allowed to submit only one application for the special wild turkey license during a license year.

According to Mary Jo Casalena, Game Commission wild turkey biologist, research has shown that properly timed and implemented multiple-bird spring limits have not caused population declines in other states.

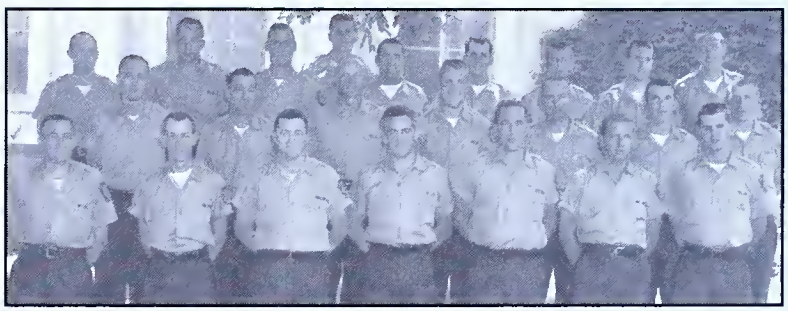
"With our large number of hunters and large harvests," Casalena said. "It's imperative that we closely monitor the population before making any additional season changes, such as all day hunting. We regularly recommend that any change remains in place for at least three years, for us to assess any impacts caused by that change, before making any other change, such as extending hunting hours beyond noon."

The license became possible on July 2, 2004, when legislation (House Bill 2042) sponsored by Rep. Merle Phillips was signed into law by Governor Edward G. Rendell.

Youth pheasant and goose seasons expanded

For 2005, the youth pheasant hunt is set for October 8-14, concurrent with the youth squirrel season. Previously, the youth pheasant hunt was a 2-day event.

12th Class Graduates of the RLSC



In the April issue, Jack Furlong was misidentified. All of the officers of the 12th class are, left to right, Row 1: Robert L. Yeakel, Robert J. Rea, David Sloan, David C. Snyder, David W. Brown, James D. Mort, Barry D. Jones; Row 2: Ronald L. Sutherland, Dean C. Beach, Ernest L. Taylor, Stephen L. Opet, Jack R. Furlong, Ronald G. Clouser, Harold D. Harshbarger;Row 3: Thomas C. Barney, James R. Fagan, Clyde E. Burkholder, Donald J. Adams, Henry G. Stankewich, Ronald E. Schmuck, Richard B. Belding, Samuel E. Lockerman; Row 4: Thomas C. Wylie.

"The youth season takes into account that most students are off school on Monday, Oct. 10, the Columbus Day holiday, as well as on Saturday, Oct. 8," said Vern Ross. "Further, the remainder of this season, Oct. 11-14, takes place before the change of daylight savings time, giving students an opportunity to go hunting after school.

For the youth pheasant and squirrel hunts, participants are not required to purchase a junior hunting license, but they must have passed a hunter education course. As with all junior hunters, those 12 and 13 years old must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or other family member 18 years or older, and those 14 and 15 must be accompanied by a person 18 or older.

In addition, the Board adopted a regulation change that allows the agency to hold youth-only waterfowl hunting days at both the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas. The change allows for a special drawing of applications submitted by junior license holders prior to the regular drawing for goose blinds. An application for this drawing is in the 2005-06 Digest and on the Game Commission website. Only one application will be accepted per junior hunter.

The exact dates of the youth-only hunts will be decided later this year.

Waterfowl seasons: While the Board gave final approval for the 2005-06 seasons and bag limits, seasons and bag limits for waterfowl and other migratory birds will be set by mid-August.

163 acres acquired

At the April meeting the Board approved two proposals that will increase the State Game Lands system by 163 acres.

Cambria County: a land exchange involving a 1-acre parcel on SGL 108 in Reade Township with Joan Noonan, who will provide $12,000 toward the purchase of an indenture in SGL 184 consisting of two tracts totaling 113 acres in Clearfield and Dean townships that will become part of SGL 184. This acquisition will provide public access along nearly one mile of Clearfield Creek, a stocked trout stream. SGL 184 currently contains 4,448 acres.

Clinton County: a 50-acre parcel in that will provide an important access to SGL 321, from John and Sandra Visser for $20,000.

Middle Creek Programs

THE FOLLOWING programs will be held at Middle Creek this month. **June 8* "Rabies"** Tom Wampler, Microbiologist. Working with rabies diagnostics since 1973, Wampler now serves as Rabies Outreach Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and he will cover the history of rabies, its prevalence worldwide and in Pennsylvania and much more.

June 22* "Mister Black Powder" Dave Ehrig, *Game News* columnist, outdoor writer and black powder enthusiast. Ehrig's muzzleloading pursuits have taken him on hunting, photographic and journalistic endeavors all across North America. His programs are known for their excitement, valuable how-to information, and their ability to motivate both novice and experienced outdoorsmen. Even if you are not a hunter you will enjoy this program.

The Middle Creek visitors center is located south of Kleinfeltersville, in northern Lancaster County. ***Note:** Wednesday nights only

Board approves online harvest reportings

The Board approved a regulatory change that moves the agency one step closer to being able to accept deer and turkey harvest report card information online or through a toll-free telephone system. "The Game Commission looks forward to being able to offer hunters a more convenient method of reporting deer and turkey harvests," said Vern Ross. "In addition to making it more convenient for hunters to report harvests, we hope to see reporting rates improve. The new process will reduce our cost to have harvest report card data entered, and nearly eliminate the $150,000 we must spend annually to cover postage and handling of harvest report cards for deer and turkey."

To make the online reporting system work, the Game Commission must first implement a point-of-sale licensing system, which will create a database of license buyers. When going online to report a harvest, the agency's system will be able to cross-reference the hunter's report with his or her license.

Implementation of a point-of-sale system, however, is dependent upon additional revenues. The current estimate for implementing point-of-sale is $2 million.

"Besides making the agency and its programs more user-friendly, point-of-sale will give us a computer database of all of our license buyers," Ross said, "which will enable us to much more cost-effectively conduct hunter surveys."

In other action, the Board:

- Authorized the removal of an 85-acre propagation area on the agency's Western Game Farm in Crawford County, to increase hunting opportunities and alleviate problems deer were causing.
- Commissioner Gregory J. Isabella announced that state Senator Vincent Fumo (D-Philadelphia) has secured $100,000 for DCNR to extend its contracted Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) flights through the winter of 2005-06. These flights will be conducted over 12 State Game Lands that will be identified later.
- Commissioner Stephen Mohr directed staff to develop for the October meeting a report on the feasibility of holding an archery bear season.
- Proposed to increase the fee for taking the PGC taxidermy exam from $50 to $300, due at application submission. In addition, the board set a retake fee of $50 for any part of the exam that isn't completed by the applicant.
- Announced the next scheduled meeting of the Board will be held June 27-28, at the agency's Harrisburg headquarters. Other meetings set by the Board, all of which will be held in the agency's headquarters, are: Oct. 2-4; and Jan. 22-24, 2006.

$2.85 million reduction in services and programs

FACING a $3 million deficit in the 2004-05 budget, Executive Director Vern Ross has approved cuts and reductions amounting to $2.85 million. Ross noted that the budget will continue to be reviewed, to save a total of $3.1 million in 2004-05, work is underway to identify cuts and reductions

of up to $7 million in the 2005-06 budget. (The 2004-05 budget ends on June 30, and the 2005-06 budget runs from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006.)

One reason for the shortfall is that anticipated timber revenues for 2003-04 was $12 million, but actual revenues came in at only $7.3 million.

Some of the 2004-05 cuts are internal, such as reductions in equipment purchases and cutting travel budgets, and will not necessarily be seen or felt by the public. However, other cuts, such as the 50 percent reduction in pheasant production, and the elimination of free *Game News* subscriptions to school and public libraries and cooperators in our public access programs, will be felt by the public.

Unanticipated expenses that forced the need for cuts and reductions include:

- a one-time $700,000 charge to cover the agency's share of a deficit in the state employee's benefit program caused by increased medical and prescription costs;
- $2.78 million in 2002-03 and 2003-04, and another $700,000 in 2004-05 to compensate retiring employees for unused vacation and sick leave;
- Increases in vehicle costs have reduced the agency's ability to replace older vehicles and, therefore, extended the mileage at which vehicles are replaced. This has reduced the $1.5 million the agency budgets for new vehicle purchases and expanded the payments for vehicle repairs;
- Increases in the overall in-lieu-of tax payments, due to new land acquisitions;
- Other increases in prices for necessary items, such as gasoline, utilities, lime, fertilizer and seed.

In addition, Hurricane Ivan caused $1 million in damages. While 75 percent of the repair costs are reimbursable, through state and federal emergency management agencies, the Game Commission has yet to identify how it will secure the 25 percent matching funds in the current or next fiscal years.

> In light of the budget cuts the agency has had to make, which include the elimination of complimentary *Game New* subscriptions to the nearly 30,000 landowners enrolled in the cooperative access programs, consider buying *Game News* gift subscriptions to landowners who allow you to hunt on their properties. Not only is the monthly *Game News* a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year, at only $12 a year, or $34.50 for three, it is also an outstanding bargain.

The $2.85 million in cost savings and reductions identified so far for 2004-05 include:

- Reducing the number of pheasants produced from 200,000 to 100,000, which is expected to save $185,000. Additional savings will be realized in 2005-06;
- Discontinuing, by July 1, toll-free numbers to the six region offices. Savings are estimated to be $27,000 in the 2005-06 fiscal year;
- Canceling complimentary *Pennsylvania Game News* subscriptions will save $31,300 for the remainder of this fiscal year, and $165,000 in 2005-06;
- Canceling seed mix orders for landowners enrolled in the Game Commission's public access programs will save $72,000;
- Canceling an order for more of the agency's educational coloring book will save $60,000;
- Reducing overtime budgets by $182,000, with additional cuts planned for 2005-06. This cut may impact the agency's ability to conduct public education programs, respond to

nuisance wildlife complaints and pick up roadkilled deer;

- Eliminating the 2004-05 Game-Take Survey, the Wildlife Diversity Survey and a human dimensions survey planned for the current fiscal year, which will save $125,000;
- Putting on hold the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program will save $30,000 in 2004-05 and $50,000 in 2005-06;
- Reducing travel and training by $305,000. Additional reductions will be implemented in 2005-06;
- Reducing funding for deer fencing by $150,000, with additional cuts planned for 2005-06;
- Reducing the bear damage complaint account by $40,000, with additional cuts planned for 2005-06;
- Delaying the hiring of seasonal employees, for a savings of $388,000;
- Reducing the number of signs made for State Game Lands will save $70,000;
- Stopping engineering contracts for projects put on hold will save $150,000; and
- Reducing or canceling information technology consulting contracts will save $115,000, and other pending contracts are being reviewed.

"Until the agency receives an increase in funding, we will continue to conserve sportsmen's dollars," Ross said, "yet limit the impact on hunters, trappers and other Pennsylvanians and maintain the integrity of our wildlife management programs."

The Game Commission does not receive any general state taxpayer dollars.

The Game Commission recently presented to the PPL Corporation a fine art print of Susan Bankey Yoder's "Foxtail Pheasants," in recognition of the corporation's longstanding support of wildlife and habitat management initiatives. Pictured, left to right, are Kevin Drewenski, Superintendant, Environmental Preserve at PPL; PGC land management group supervisor Keith Sanford; Ms. Joanne H. Raphael, vice president of External Affairs for PPL; Mike Schmit, PGC deputy executive director; and Montour County WCO Randy Shoup.



Pennsylvania CWD Task Force monitoring CWD infection in New York

PA remains CWD free

NO EVIDENCE of chronic wasting disease (CWD) was detected in samples taken from hunter-killed deer during the 2004 hunting season.

"We are pleased to announce that Pennsylvania continues to have no confirmed or suspected cases of CWD-infected deer or elk, and we are doing everything we can to ensure that it stays that way," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. The number of samples tested for CWD was 3,699 in 2004, up substantially from the 2,003 deer sampled in 2003. Last year's results for CWD also were negative. (All the hunter-killed elk from 2004 also tested negative for CWD.)

Tests on the deer samples were conducted by the New Bolton Center, which is the University of Pennsylvania's veterinary diagnostics laboratory, and the Department of Agriculture's State Veterinary Laboratory in Harrisburg. The New Bolton Center also conducted the CWD tests on the elk samples. Under a contract with Penn State University, the elk samples also were tested for brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis and found to be free from these diseases.

Costs for conducting these tests are covered by a $54,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; any Game Fund dollars spent are reimbursed. The federal grant covers all testing, materials and supplies, and some of the agency's personnel costs for sample collection.

Deer samples were collected during the 2-week firearm deer season, and elk samples were collected during the elk season. This marked the fourth year for testing hunter-killed elk and the third year for testing hunter-killed deer. In total, 162 elk and 6,259 deer have been tested.

"Although CWD has not been found in Pennsylvania, we must continue to be vigilant" said Ross. "The surveillance information we are gathering is important for the early detection of CWD."

Ross added that since 1998, the Game Commission, in cooperation with the state Department of Agriculture, has tested more than 350 deer that died of unknown illnesses or were exhibiting abnormal behavior. No evidence of CWD was found in these samples, either. The Game Commission will continue to monitor for and collect samples from deer and elk that appear sick or behave abnormally.

However, Ross noted that the Game Commission and other members of Pennsylvania's CWD Task Force went on increased alert in late March, when it was announced that a captive white-tailed deer, in Oneida County, New York, was found to be infected with

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

CWD. Several other captive deer infected with CWD were found in New York, and then in late April a wild deer in Oneida County, New York, was found to be infected with CWD.

"We truly appreciate the openness with which New York officials are handling this most unfortunate situation," Ross said. "This has enabled the Game Commission and Pennsylvania's other CWD Task Force members to monitor the ongoing process of evaluating the New York cases, while at the same time determining what course of action is necessary for our state.

"While Oneida County is outside the 50-mile radius that would trigger activation of Pennsylvania's CWD response plan, it does require that we examine our plan and ensure that we are all informed with the most updated information about New York's situation."

As of January, Pennsylvania had 687 deer propagators, 24 elk propagators and 55 propagators with both deer and elk. Pennsylvania ranks as one of the top states in deer propagators.

First identified in Colorado in 1967, CWD is a transmissible disease that affects members of the deer family (cervids), including white-tailed deer and elk. It is a progressive and always fatal disease, which scientists theorize is caused by an unknown agent capable of transforming normal brain proteins into an abnormal form. Once the abnormal form is created, it changes the shape of adjacent proteins and causes holes to form in brain tissue.

There currently is no practical way to test live animals for CWD, no cure for animals that contact the disease and no vaccine to prevent an animal from contracting the disease. Clinical signs include poor posture, lowered head and ears, uncoordinated movement, rough-hair coat, decreased appetite, weight loss, increased thirst, excessive drooling, and, ultimately, death.

There is no scientific evidence of CWD being transmitted to humans or to other, non-cervid livestock under normal conditions.

Deer or elk harboring CWD may not show any signs of the disease for the first 18 months, and then death follows normally within a year of when symptoms begin.

CWD has been found in wild or captive deer or elk herds in Colorado; Wyoming; Montana; Utah; New Mexico; New York; South Dakota; Nebraska; Kansas; Oklahoma; Minnesota; Wisconsin and Illinois. In addition, CWD has been detected in wild or captive deer and elk in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Anyone who sees Pennsylvania deer or elk behaving oddly, that appear to be very sick, or that are dying for unknown reasons are urged to contact the nearest Game Commission region office. Individuals should not kill the animal.

"We are very serious about preventing CWD from entering Pennsylvania," said Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management Assistant Director Bob Boyd, who has been overseeing the agency's wildlife disease issues. "Some scientific modeling suggests that if nothing is done to contain an outbreak of CWD in states with high-density deer populations such as Pennsylvania, the disease could cause a local deer population's demise within 20 to 25 years.

"We also are concerned about the potential environmental contamination that could be caused by CWD, as well as the serious economic impact that would result."

To learn more about CWD, visit www.pgc.state.pa.us, and click on "Hunting & Trapping" and then select "Chronic Wasting Disease."

2005-06 hunting seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, red, gray, black and fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, (no license required) - Oct. 8-14 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Squirrels, red, gray, black and fox (Combined): Fall Season - Oct. 15-Nov. 26; Late Seasons - Dec. 12-23, and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Ruffed grouse: Oct. 15-Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28 (2 daily, 4 possession). There is no open season for taking ruffed grouse in that portion of State Game Lands No. 176 in Centre County which is posted "RESEARCH AREA - NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (cottontail): Oct. 22-Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: For eligible junior hunters, no license required - Oct. 8-14 (2 daily, 4 in possession). Male pheasants only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D. Male and female pheasants may be taken in all other WMUs.

Pheasant: Male only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D - Oct. 22-Nov. 26. Male and female in WMUs 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4A, 4B and 4D - Oct. 22- Nov. 26, Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 4 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Bobwhite quail: Oct. 22-Nov. 26 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in WMUs 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D.)

Hares (snowshoe rabbits) or varying hares: Dec. 26-Dec. 31 (1 daily, 2 possession).

Woodchucks (groundhogs): No closed season, except Sundays and during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1-Nov. 27, and Dec. 30-April 2, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and english sparrows: No closed season, except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season. No limit.

Wild turkey (Male or Female): Wildlife Management Units 1A and 1B (Shotgun and bow and arrow)- Oct. 29-Nov. 12; WMU 2A and 2B (Shotgun and bow and arrow) - Oct. 29-Nov. 19; WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D - Oct. 29-Nov. 12; WMUs 2D, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E - Oct. 29-Nov. 19; WMUs 5A and 5B - CLOSED TO FALL TURKEY HUNTING; and WMUs 5C and 5D (Shotgun and bow and arrow) - Oct. 29-Nov. 4. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring gobbler (Bearded bird only): April 29-May 27, 2006. Daily limit 1, season limit 2 (Second spring gobbler may be taken only by persons who possess a valid special wild turkey license).

Spring gobbler (Bearded bird only): Special season for eligible junior hunters, *license required* - April 22, 2006. Only 1 spring gobbler may be taken.

continued

Black bear (Statewide): Nov. 21-23. Only one bear may be taken during the license year.

Black bear (WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E): Nov. 28-Dec. 3. Only one bear may be taken during the license year.

Black bear (Rockview State Correctional Institution) - Nov. 28-Dec. 3. Only one bear may be taken during the license year. Prior approval must be obtained from prison to hunt.

Elk (antlered or antlerless): **Sept. 18-23, 2006**. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Elk (antlered or antlerless): Nov. 7-12. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Deer, Archery (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Oct. 1-Nov. 12 and Dec. 26-Jan. 14. One antlered deer per hunting license year. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Nov. 28-Dec. 10. One antlered deer per hunting license year. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless deer (Statewide): Oct. 20-22. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, which includes the U.S. Coast Guard, only, with required antlerless license. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under Section 2706. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless muzzleloader (Statewide): Oct. 15-22. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlered or antlerless flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 14. One antlered deer per hunting license year, or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (WMU 2B): Dec. 26-Jan. 14. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (WMUs 5C and 5D): Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 28. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless (Military Bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Detrick, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

2005-06 furbearer hunting seasons

Raccoon & foxes: Oct. 15-Feb. 18, unlimited.

Coyote, opossum, skunks & weasels: No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons. No limits.

Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 15-Feb. 18. One per permit. (Bobcats may only be taken by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

2005-06 trapping seasons

Mink & muskrat: Nov. 19-Jan. 7. Unlimited.
Coyote, foxes, opossum, raccoon, skunks, weasels: Oct. 16-Feb. 18. No limit.
Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31, 2006 (Limits vary depending on WMU).
Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 16-Feb. 18. One per permit. (Bobcats may only be taken by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

2005-06 falconry seasons

Squirrels (combined), quail, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbits, snowshoe or varying hare, ringneck pheasant (male or female combined): Sept. 1-March 31. Daily and Field Possession limits vary.

No open season on other wild birds or mammals. Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird seasons will be established in accordance with Federal Regulations this summer.

25-Year Club

The Game Commission enjoys a tremendous spirit of dedication among its employees. Here are the most recent PGC employees to complete a quarter century of service.



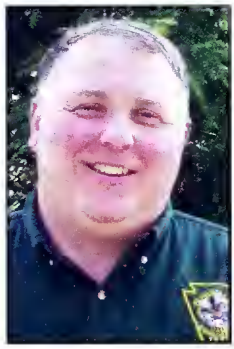
J. Carl Graybill, Jr.
Director
Bureau of Information & Education
Harrisburg
Annville



Emma Atha
Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor
Northwest Region
Titusville



Timothy Benfield
Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor
Southeast Region
New Berlinville



David Henry
Forester Assistant Manager
Southeast Region
Birdsboro

Also attaining 25 years of service but not pictured are Michael Osborn, Forester, Northcentral Region, Jersey Shore; Rick Emick, Wildlife Maintenance Propagator, Northcentral Region Game Farm, Williamsport; Gerald Christie, Game Lands Maintenance Worker 2, Northwest Region, Portersville; Mark Hoban, Wildlife Maintenance Propagator, Western Game Farm, Guys Mills; and Jeffry Noah, Game Lands Maintenance Worker 2, Southwest Region, Midland.

Off the Wire
by Bob D'Angelo

Costs of Losing Hunting & Trapping

Based on a survey of state wildlife agencies and a detailed review of existing literature, if hunting and trapping were lost as wildlife management tools an additional 50,000 injuries per year from wildlife/vehicle collisions would occur, with an estimated $3.8 billion in additional auto repair costs. Also, $1.45 billion in new health care and disease control costs just for rabies alone would be incurred. Hunters and trappers provide these wildlife control services mostly free. In the absence of public hunting or trapping, government (taxpayers) would likely be called upon to control wildlife.

West Virginia

Last fall hunters took 1,295 turkeys, down 30 percent from the 1,841 taken in 2003. 2004's was the lowest fall harvest since 1967. The top three counties were Monroe (164), Greenbrier (138) and Preston (125).

Missouri

Hunters checked a record 60,744 turkeys — including 3,269 taken by youngsters during a 2-day youth hunt — during the 2004 spring season. Despite rain and wind, 29,018 birds were harvested during the first week of the 3-week season.

North Dakota

In 2003-04, 69 bobcats were taken, down slightly from the 77 taken in 2002-03. Forty-two percent of the 2003-04 harvest was taken by trapping.

Wyoming

A tiny plant that is part fungus and part algae was responsible for the deaths of nearly 300 elk near Rawlins early in 2004. The plant is a lichen known as parmelia, and it's abundant in desert soils around the state. Parmelia produces an acid that may break down muscle tissue, which caused the elk to lose strength and not be able to rise after lying down. Officials are investigating why, or if, it accumulated inordinately high amounts of acid when the deaths occurred. No other animals, including horses, cattle, antelope, deer and scavengers in the area were afflicted.

New Hampshire

A record 802 bears were harvested in 2003, from a population estimated at 5,300. The 2003 harvest was nearly twice the 5-year average of 418.

Alarming

A recent mapping project by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reveals that roads, housing and other infrastructure cover nearly 5,500 more square miles in the contiguous U.S. than all of the nation's remaining wetlands.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Last Year's Deer — It's What's for Dinner

NEARLY SIX MONTHS have gone by since deer season, and you still have venison in the freezer? You say you've had deer meat "your way" more than one too many times? If your favorite venison cuts have long since been eaten, and you find yourself standing with the freezer door open, wondering what to do with what's left, don't despair. I'm no chef, but I have prepared lots of deer meat, and I have found delicious answers to our common problem.

The steaks and chops or butterfly fillets from the young does our family shot were the first to go, within weeks of when they were on the hoof. The often-heard quote around here regarding this venison is, "Mmmm, I can't believe there are people who would rather eat beef."

Next to be consumed were the same cuts from larger, older deer or bucks, sometimes marinated or grilled with barbecue sauce. Then I used the roasts from the shoulder blades and the rumps. I've cooked the ground venison alternately with the other cuts, first as deer burgers on a bun, then other ground meat dishes, until I've run out of ideas. Lastly, the freezer contains miscellaneous "chunks and hunks" of deer meat, such as from the shanks, the brisket or the neck, especially if I butchered the deer myself and didn't have access to a grinder.

Now that it's almost summer, I stare into the freezer thinking, considering, ghost-tasting what I could make from the venison still on the shelves. Time to get creative. Am I in the mood to make


Bob Steiner

"Whatcha Got in the Fridge Soup," or its heartier alternate, "This n' That From the Freezer Stew?" If I have frozen or home-canned vegetables from last year's growing season, I need to use them up soon, too, and this is a perfect opportunity.

A batch of my recipe-less soup or stew is guaranteed to be delicious, but I can never duplicate it. I literally use the odds — the odd-shaped cuts from home butchering — and the ends — the meat left on the end of the bone after I slice the steaks. I thaw the meat and cut it into stew or soup-size pieces, trimming any fat or sinew. I used to make stew and soup cubes when I butchered the deer, then a professional chef told me that meat will freeze better if it is not cut up small. Air is the bane of frozen food. Although I was making the venison pieces a convenient

Oven Venison Salami

5 pounds ground venison, with some beef fat
5 teaspoons tenderizing curing salt
3 teaspoons mustard seed
2 1/2 teaspoons coarse black pepper
2 1/2 teaspoons garlic salt
3 teaspoons hickory smoke salt

Mix in a large glass bowl (not metal) and refrigerate. Once a day for three days, knead well. On the fourth day, form into five long rolls (like salami) and place on the oven rack (with a pan underneath) or on a broiler pan in the oven. Bake at 140 degrees for about 8 hours. At 7 1/2 hours, turn over and bake the last half hour (turn oven up to over 212 degrees shortly before removing). May be frozen.

size for later use, I was also creating many more surfaces that could be subjected to freezer burn. By freezing the deer meat as larger pieces and cutting it to recipe size on demand, I reduce the amount of surface area. This lessens the chance of dehydration and off-flavor from lengthy freezing.

After I cube several pounds of stew or soup meat, I go back to the freezer or fridge and see what else might taste good in my creation. I've learned that my best venison soups and stews include onion and cabbage. The rest is optional. Carrots, potatoes, corn, beans, mushrooms, peas, limas, summer squash, celery, tomatoes — they're all occasionally "in there." Peppers can overpower the mix, so I use them only when they're a headliner in my soup or stew plan. Dishes with cabbage benefit from a touch of sweetness, so as a "secret" ingredient I add peeled apple slices. Canned or homemade beef broth or bouillon cubes to taste are best for the liquid in your venison soup or stew. After the stew or soup is enjoyed that night for dinner, I freeze it in containers for later meals, not only during the coming summer, but also into next fall's hunting seasons. Since the venison has been cooked thoroughly in these dishes, it is safe to freeze again. As with any meat food, though, don't let the soup or stew cool and stand about on the counter before freezing or refrigerating it.

Is there still a lot of deer burger in your freezer? Better use it soon, especially if it was ground with beef or pork suet. Fat reduces the freezer life of meat. Ground meat that has been frozen too long develops a grayish color and a "freezer" smell. So make deer burger meatballs, meat loaf, chili, sloppy joes and such now, freezing the fully cooked dishes for meals another day.

You might also want to make something like Oven Venison Salami (see sidebar); it's my mother-in-law's recipe. Another way I use ground venison is to mix it with ground pork and make sausage patties. I couldn't find a recipe to please me, so I combined the features of several in my preparation, including salt and coarsely ground black pepper, fennel seed and pinches of sugar, garlic powder and allspice, all to taste. Make the patties, cook to doneness but not dryness, and enjoy immediately or freeze some.

Marinating and smoking is another way to finish up last year's venison. I have a small, commercially made smoker (Little Chief) that works fine for small batches of thin meat. Slice whatever cut you have across the grain, to promote tenderness, into jerky-style strips. Marinate in your favorite jerky recipe or try your own mix. I "invented" one a while back, marinating venison strips in Worcestershire sauce, onion slices, garlic and pepper, then smoking them. The Worcestershire sauce added the needed salt; try soy or teriyaki sauce if those are your favorites. Jerky can also be prepared in the oven, using a recipe that includes a smoky flavoring. Invite your buddies to help eat the smoked venison, or freeze some for later snacking.

With Father's Day coming this month,

now is a good time to gift a dad who likes to cook with a new game recipe book. If there is venison left from the season gone by, he'll plunge right into preparing the recipes. If your family has eaten last year's deer, Dad will appreciate having the books on hand for any deer that are shot next fall, without having to wait for Christmas. I especially like that classic, the "Pennsylvania Game Cookbook," not only because its recipes are delicious and proven family favorites, but also because the names and hometowns of the cooks are listed (I even have several recipes in there). The book is available from the Game Commission and is on their website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

I also get a lot of kitchen use from the "Quality Venison" series, I, II and III by Steve and Gale Loder (P.O. Box 1615, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066). These spiral bound volumes have a plastic-coated cover (featuring wildlife and hunting artwork by Jack Paluh) for easy wiping if you're a messy cook. The books are not only full of great recipes, including "Loder Family Favorites;" "Crockery Cooking;" and venison "Italian," "Southern" and "Traditional" style; but have "Homespun Deer Tales" that are fun reading. The third book in the series includes recipes for more wild game than deer, but then a meal in most hunting households is more than just venison. □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

Deer Search

Unscramble the words associated with deer, but watch out as there is at least one extra unwanted letter at the beginning or end of each word. Copy these "unwanted" letters in the order they appear in the spaces at the bottom.

TRUA	___ ___ ___
GEAWFN	___ ___ ___ ___
GEEVTEVL	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
CUBKNE	___ ___ ___ ___
TINIGHTUN	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
KSIPECS	___ ___ ___ ___ ___
NUTEANRLS	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
TRUNGTR	___ ___ ___ ___ ___
EODIT	___ ___ ___
IONGLAYRENI	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

A buck's rack size and number of points is determined by:

___ ___ ___, ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___, and ___ ___ ___ ___ ___-

___ ___ ___ ___.

answers on p. 63

The quest for breeding birds adds a lot of interest to my daily walks in late spring and early summer.

Chasing Breeding Birds

YOU KNOW you're getting old when you start repeating yourself, I thought when I first heard about Pennsylvania's Second Breeding Bird Atlas project.

"Been there, done that," I said and immediately signed up last spring to be the "owner" of the two blocks that include our property. "Same, yet different" is probably an apt description of this second project. Instead of relying on paper reports of the breeding birds we observe in our blocks, this time around we send in our reports via the computer — censusers without access to the Internet can still participate the "old-fashioned" way.

Having previously discovered with Project Feederwatch that sending reports in electronically was much easier than filling in the charts sent by snail mail, I figured that it would be just as easy to do the same for my atlas records. Well, it wasn't. After repeated rejections by the program, I stopped trying. Turns out, though, that other participants were frustrated, too, but the bugs were worked out, and when I finally took a deep breath and tried again, with the help of my husband, Bruce, it worked. This year should be a breeze, now that I've conquered the electronic bogeyman.

The boundary line between my two blocks runs across the top of First Field directly below the spruce grove, so every time I took a walk, I kept two lists of the birds I heard and saw. My home block is 61c65. It includes the hollow, the former clearcut, and a fair portion of both Sapsucker and Laurel ridges. What I call the Far Field block, 61c56, takes in the spruce grove, the road to the Far Field, the Far Field itself and beyond. These blocks are large, and I can't hope to completely cover them, but anyone who makes observations in my blocks is also free to report them either electronically or to the Project Coordinator, Robert S. Mulvihill, at the Powdermill Nature Reserve.

The 17 breeding codes for the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas are similar to those of the first atlas, and I had no trouble using them. For instance, "X" means "possible," and is defined as "an individual of a species seen or heard in suitable nesting habitat within safe dates, but not exhibiting any of the breeding behaviors described in" the other categories.

Initially, all my bird observations fell into the "possible" category — 69 species in my home block and 43 species in the Far Field block. Many remained in that category throughout the season, but day by day some of the "possibles" became "probables" and even "confirmed" breeding birds.

Because I know my territory well, walk the trails every day, and have, over the years, learned the songs and calls of all the birds that live here, compiling the "probables" was easy. Confirming them was harder because I had to see an adult bird carrying nesting material, food or fecal sac, observe nest-building, watch a distraction display (such as a ruffed grouse feigning an injury), find a recently fledged young or a nest with eggs or young, or see an adult feeding fledged young. All such discoveries were serendipitous as far as I was concerned.

Yard birds in my home block were particularly easy. One family of eastern phoebes plastered its nest beneath the eaves of our springhouse and another built its on top of one of the porticos on our veranda. The springhouse nest, filled with five eggs, was a source of wonder to our 4-year-old great niece Morgan visiting from New Jersey. Later, when our nephew Patrick visited, that same nest contained four young phoebes and a huge young cowbird. The cowbird fluttered off the nest and on to the ground when Patrick appeared. He was distressed and wanted to return it to the nest, but I explained to him that it would take more than its share of food from its unwitting foster parents and deprive its foster siblings of food. Nevertheless, we later found that it was strong enough to fly back into the nest. Still, those phoebes did fledge successfully on June 1.

The veranda phoebe nest allowed our visiting granddaughter Eva to watch the parents feeding the young from our upstairs hall window. That family also fledged successfully.

During Eva's visit in late May and early June, she and our son Dave also discovered an eastern towhee nest with eggs in a barberry bush, and she and our son Steve discovered a turkey sitting on her nest at the base of a beech tree near our road.

Best of all, from Eva's point of view, was the last walk we took before she went home to Mississippi. As we started down First Field, a hen turkey jumped up from the tall grass a couple feet in front of Eva. She was so startled she screamed and saw a 1-week-old chick run. The mother hen, clucking loudly, walked slowly away, and Eva, entranced by her seeming tameness, followed her on to the Laurel Ridge Trail. Eventually, I persuaded her to leave



eastern towhee

so the mother could return to her hidden chicks.

I made my own discoveries almost every day in May, June and early July. On May 16, I stopped to rest on a log beside Greenbrier Trail and was continually scolded by a female hooded warbler. After a while she "showed" me her nest. She landed on it, inside a barberry hedge, moved around and then flew off. I checked it and found no eggs, but on June 2 she was sitting tightly on it.

Another bird that "showed" me her nest was the Acadian flycatcher. As I walked up the road that same June 2, an Acadian flycatcher scolded. Knowing that they often like to build their nests near the tip of a beech tree limb, I scanned all the small beech trees but couldn't see a nest. It turned out to be suspended from the branch of a witch hazel tree overhanging the road.

One bird that did not show me its nest was the sharp-shinned hawk. Yet I suspected, as early as April 22 when a sharpie flew out from the Norway spruce grove, landed nearby, and emitted its high-pitched "creer-creer" call, that a pair was nesting there. Still, I played a cat-and-mouse game, mostly with the male, throughout the spring.

But on July 6, as I approached the grove, the male flew out, landed in a nearby black locust tree, and called "creer-creer-creer." Then the female suddenly flew from the vicinity where I thought I had found a nest back in May. She, too, called but disappeared over the hill while the male continued "creering" and flying above me.

Sharpies are so secretive during nesting that little is known of their nesting behavior. I never saw a sign of life in what I thought was their nest built in a dense, double-spired spruce tree. Yet every time I approached the spruce grove, the male would either fly out and call or be sitting on the same black locust tree limb at the back of the grove. This spot provided a view of all possible predators, including the female red-tailed hawk I saw him chase away on June 6. He looked like the proverbial bee chasing a bear, but even though she seemed to shrug off his repeated diving, she eventually disappeared over Laurel Ridge.

Finally, on July 9, I had my proof. The male sharpie flew over and called as I emerged on the far side of the spruce grove. I heard another, lower pitched call, coming from the deciduous forest near the grove, and then an immature sharpie landed and called "wheep-wheep-wheep" directly above me.

Throughout the month I heard and often saw young sharpies crying "wheep-wheep-wheep" and their parents answering "kik-kik-kik." Sometimes they flew and called on the ridges and even near our house. The "wheeping" calls of the young sharpies continued into mid-August, and several times I saw two together. There may have been more — sharpies average four to five young — but I never saw them.

Although the sharpie nesting was the highlight of my 2004 Breeding Bird Atlas "work," I did have other exciting confirma-



tions. On June 20, in the late afternoon, cedar waxwings flew continuously to one black walnut tree branch, half-hidden by leaves, and then down into the yard. It looked as if they were gathering either food or nesting material. In early evening, one flew down in front of me to gather something and then flew up to the branch where another waxwing was moving around. I thought I could see a nest on the branch, but I wasn't certain.

Then, on July 13, while sitting on our veranda, I heard scolding calls and saw an adult cedar waxwing perched on our clothesline that repeatedly dove down into the tall grass. I rushed up to look and there sat a small, grayish-brown, cedar waxwing fledgling, sporting a white stripe near its eye, a tiny crest, and the yellow stripe on its tail. Both parents dove at me when I tried to pick it up and put it in shrubbery, so I left them to solve their own problems.

The quest for breeding birds adds a lot of interest to walks in late spring and early summer and makes one more aware of happenings in the avian world.

In addition to the young cedar waxwing, I also saw an adult American kestrel with two immatures perched on our electric wire and a fledgling Carolina wren in our lilac bush.

Baltimore orioles suspended their nest from a black walnut branch that overhangs our driveway; black-capped chickadees nested in an old fencepost near the barn; and gray catbirds built their nest in a thicket of forsythia. I watched a black-throated green warbler gather nesting materials along Greenbrier Trail, a field sparrow doing the same in First Field, and a female wood thrush, accompanied by a male, collecting dead leaves and grasses for a late nesting on July 6.

Several birds also performed distraction displays. Along Black Gum Trail one morning, I heard scolding and walked off the trail and "pished." A blue-headed vireo dove at my head and just missed me. I couldn't find the nest, but as soon as I walked away he resumed his singing. A histrionic ovenbird blundered around in the underbrush, bumping into shrubs, and then flew up and down. A Louisiana waterthrush, beside our stream, a worm-eating warbler on the Black Gum Trail, and a brown thrasher, at the edge of the woods, also distraction-displayed.

I even managed to watch birds gathering food for their young. A male scarlet tanager at the edge of the Far Field Road and a yellow-billed cuckoo at the edge of the Far Field.

I had my disappointments, though. A cerulean warbler sang in our yard, as one had the previous year, throughout June. So, too, did one at the Far Field. Yet they remained on the "possible" list. I would like to have confirmed them because they are, along with several other species I confirmed in my blocks — Louisiana waterthrush, black-throated green warbler, sharp-shinned hawk, wood thrush, and worm-eating warbler — of "general conservation interest" to the Atlas.

None of my birds made the higher categories — "regional rarity" or "statewide rarity." In past years we have had at least two "regional rarities" nesting here — golden-crowned kinglet and winter wren — but not last year.

Still, the quest for breeding birds adds interest to my daily walks in late spring and early summer and makes me more aware of what is going on in the avian world. And there is always the chance that I'll discover some of those rarities.

For more information on the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Survey, visit www.pabirdatlas.org. □

Grounded

WITH RARE exceptions, archery hunters regard the activity of bowhunting as synonymous with "tree hunting," that is, hunting from elevated stands placed in trees. Most of us believe, and rightly so, that climbing to an altitude of 10, 15 or more feet helps us outwit the defense mechanisms of a wily whitetail. Such elevated hunting provides a hunter with certain advantages. Deer are much less likely to see you or scent you. Movement, especially that of drawing the bow, is less conspicuous when it occurs above the normal sightline of that wary buck.

And while it's likely that 95 percent or more of the deer taken during archery seasons in woodland-rich states like Pennsylvania are taken from treestands, arguments can be made that, when certain circumstances prevail, the hunter may be better off grounded. Had Shakespeare's Hamlet been a bowhunter, his famous soliloquy may have stated it this way: "To tree or not to tree, that is the question."

Let's take a look at some hunting situations where "not to tree" might just be the right answer — where a deer ends up being the one who "suffers the slings and [especially] arrows of outrageous fortune."

Adverse Weather Conditions

When it comes to hunting, I'll confess to being a fair weather fan. I prefer to hunt on calm, crisp, sunny days, but when time is limited, I can't always pick and choose. Sometimes weather conditions turn downright hazardous for treestand hunters. Rain, snow or ice can





GROUNDED HUNTERS need to be more aware of their scent and wind than their treebound brethren. Scent killer and cover scents can mask human scent (above). Ground hunters also should opt for complete camouflage, except, of course, when fluorescent orange is required, including gloves and face netting (left).

make it difficult, dangerous and sometimes impossible to climb up into a treestand, even when a safety harness is prudently employed.

I remember one long-ago morning when I attempted to ascend a poplar tree with one of those early, prototype, portable climbing stands — "Death Trap," I believe, was the brand. A gentle predawn rain had made the thin-skinned tulip poplar as slick as a greased piglet. Despite a youthful and stubborn determination, I never made it more than a few feet up the trunk before the primitive device lost its grip and I went sliding back to the ground. Reluctantly, after half a dozen or more futile attempts, I was forced to give up, but not before permanently streaking the tree's bark with claw marks from my desperately clutching fingernails.

Excessive winds can also ground you — or should if you're the least bit safety conscious. Windblown swaying trees can create perilous balancing situations that can disrupt shot attempts and cause accidents. Again, in my youth, I remember one afternoon when a fast moving cold front caught me in my treestand. The high winds accompanying the front bumped my tree back and forth like a metronome to the point where motion sickness began to set in. At the first break in the wind, I returned to terra firma and gave up on hunting that day. Wind, rain, snow and ice — just a few of the conditions that can keep you grounded.

Time, Age and Location

Three other factors may play into "grounding" scenarios. Some hunters I know try to squeeze in as much hunting time as they can — even if it's just 15 to 20 minutes of prime time hunting before or after work. In situations where time is of such essence, precious minutes can be lost in the process of tree climbing, especially where portable stands are the rule. Bowhunters advanced in age or with poor health may also be wise to opt for hunting on the ground. Finally, the location of your hunting grounds may include terrain or vegetation poorly suited to the use of tree stands. All of these situations spell the same word, "grounded."

Advantages of Being Grounded

Now that we've explored some of the conditions that may send bowhunters out of their trees and onto the ground, let's take a look at the major advantage ground hunting has to offer. In a word — mobility. A hunter anchored in a treestand can only watch as deer feed just out of range while efforts to grunt or bleat the quarry closer are ignored. For the hunter on the ground, however, when game is spotted he can plan a stalk to intercept the deer. While it's true that a hunter in a treestand can always descend from his perch and attempt to pursue game on foot, the time it takes, along with the commotion created by the climb down, makes making a successful stalk that much more difficult. Treestand hunting is just that — the ultimate form of stand hunting, and precludes other potentially effective strategies such as stalking, still-hunting or driving deer.

Precautions

Over many years, a bowhunter hunting exclusively from treestands may develop some bad habits that, while minor and inconsequential above a deer's line of sight and smell, can create insurmountable problems on the ground. These include a tendency to move or fidget and a lack of attention to complete camouflage and scent considerations.

If you take a stand on the ground, the best way to remain concealed is to construct a blind with multiple shooting lanes. Many lightweight portable tent blinds are on the market. These blinds are inexpensive, easy to set up

and take down, and come in a variety of camouflage patterns. The better ones have black linings that prevent the hunter's silhouette from bleeding through and spooking deer. Most of these blinds have window flaps on each wall that can be zipped open on the side where shots are anticipated. These blinds are roomy enough to suit the average-sized hunter and provide enough concealment to permit some movement, particularly that of drawing the bow, without alerting the deer. They also can be set up anywhere in just a few minutes and are especially handy in areas where tree stands are prohibited or where there are no suitable trees to accommodate an elevated stand. If you opt not to use a blind, make sure you apply camouflage face make-up or wear a face net and camouflage gloves to lessen your chances of detection.

But even when comfortably concealed within a ground blind, a hunter must still acknowledge and address the issue of his scent. High in a tree, your scent is conveniently dispersed, but on the ground your odors are at nostril level to the sensitive whitetail. A hunter should take special care to predetermine the direction of the prevailing wind, and then set up downwind of the deer's anticipated approach. In addition, clothes and blind materials should be sprayed with scent removers or suppressers. Masking scents, such as fox or raccoon urine, should also be applied.

One additional benefit of hunting from a ground blind is the comfort it affords. Lightweight portable chairs that fit neatly inside these blinds are infinitely more comfortable than all but the most expensive and luxurious treestands. Commercial ground blinds are generally constructed of water resistant materials that shield the hunter from rain and wind. An added bonus is that a comfortable hunter is a content hunter, one who is more inclined to hunt for much longer periods of time at a stretch than his uncomfortable counterpart. And more time on stand equates to more venison in the freezer.

Other Strategies

While there is clearly much to commend hunting from a ground blind, the approach fails to take advantage of the greatest benefit inherent in hunting from the ground — mobility. The manifestations of mobility in hunting deer with a bow take on pretty much the same characteristics as hunting them with a firearm — still-hunting, stalking and driving.



GROUND HUNTERS can use trees and brush as cover to break up their silhouette and hide movement when stalking game.



While TREE HUNTERS are "anchored" in their stands, ground hunters have the advantage of mobility.

But, given the limited range and primitive nature of any bow, these strategies are much more demanding (and success much more rewarding) for the archer than for the gun hunter.

I'll admit to spending the bulk of my bowhunting hours harnessed to a tree. However, there are conditions where I believe that the maneuverability of being grounded offers greater benefits than being chained to a hardwood.

It's been my experience that the first weeks of our bow season (when deer are relatively unwary) and when they enter the rut are prime times for both tree and ground standers. These are seasonal times when deer are on the move. However, the weeks that occupy the middle of our season are often marked by more educated deer, especially bucks, which keep their daytime movements to a minimum.

A few mornings or afternoons of still-hunting with your bow can help break up the monotony of deerless stand vigils. One of the best times to implement this strategy is after a steady rain or, in the late season, soft snow. These conditions will reduce or eliminate the problem of crunching leaves or snapping twigs as you sneak through the forest. Blustery swirling winds will also have the effect of deadening the sound of your footsteps and provide the added benefit of dispersing your scent.

On a few evenings during this past season, I quit my stand early in order to still-hunt the edges of some crop fields and orchards. Quitting your stand just as prime time approaches is a tough choice to make, and it's one I haven't chosen often. But on at least two occasions this past year, I spotted deer and, using the available cover to conceal my approach, stalked within bow range. If you plan on hunting from an afternoon stand, try to arrive early enough to still-hunt on your approach. Don't rush to get to your stand, potentially spooking game as you do. Adopt the mindset that hunting doesn't just begin once you climb into your stand; it starts the moment you set foot in the field.

One late morning in mid-October I was still-hunting a hardwood ridge when I spotted an antlerless deer feeding on acorns and beechnuts. It was a calm, dry day and the deer was about 80 yards away. I closed the distance to 30 yards simply by stalking the deer as I used the fat trunks of old oaks and beeches to provide cover. The deer eventually fed to



TOM TATUM and one of the bucks he harvested using the ground hunting methods described in this article.

within 10 yards of me, providing an easy broadside shot — a shot I opted not to take upon identifying the deer as a button buck. The events of that morning reaffirmed that still-hunting can be an efficient way to get within bow range of deer —or at least within range of young or inexperienced deer.

For older, educated deer, drives might prove a more effective ground strategy. Setting up to drive protective cover or suspected bedding areas can be effective with just two archers alternating as drivers or standers, but drives where three bowhunters participate —generally with two standers and one driver — may prove much more efficient when it comes to "posting up" on possible escape routes. Now I've had bucks chased in front of my bow when working with one other hunter, but I'll bet many more deer slipped away unseen. Basic math suggests that if a 3-man drive is incorporated, twice as many shooting opportunities will present themselves.

Unlike the often boisterous, noisy drives performed by gun hunters, bowhunters should attempt to conduct quiet drives, where deer are bumped or nudged more stealthily from cover, checking their back trails as they sneak slowly into range of the standers while presenting reasonable — walking rather than running — shots for the archer on stand.

Some might reason that if three bowhunters participating in a drive is better than two, wouldn't four or five be even better? There are many variables involved in organizing any drive. These range from the terrain, to the size of the area to be covered, to the individual time schedules of those participating. Experience tells me that, generally speaking, two archers is a bit thin for an effective drive and four or more gets a bit unwieldy. In most cases, three seems optimal, but I'll qualify that by adding that there's an exception to every situation.

Ultimately, the truth of the matter is that most bowhunters, when given the option, will still be inclined to climb a tree on their next bowhunting excursion. But just remember, the next time you find yourself grounded either by circumstances or by choice, you can make it work to your advantage. □

Embellishment — adding something nonessential to enhance an item's appearance. And there's no better example than . . .

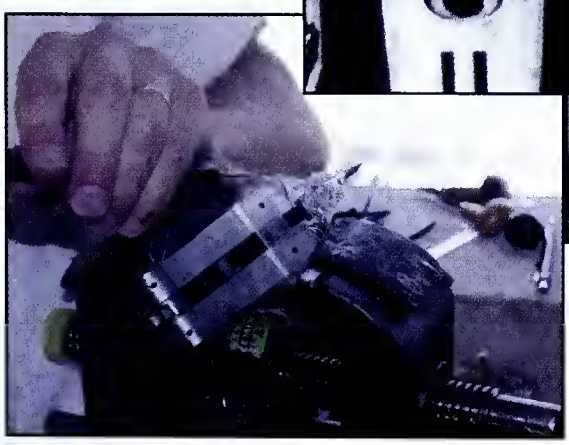
Artistry in Steel

TRUTH BE TOLD, most hunters and shooters don't see the need for much embellishment on their firearms. "Fancy engraving or beautiful wood won't make it shoot any better, so why bother," they say. Hunters, though, became involved with embellishment long ago. When hunters started painting wildlife on cave walls, there was most likely those who wanted their drawings to look a little better than the other guy's.

Early bows and spears were decorated with feathers and color. Shields used to protect hunters from the claws of wild cats were embellished with drawings of the hunters' prey: perhaps to bring them luck. Men later engraved animals and designs on swords, lances and armor to make those items more attractive.

Engraving arms also was once a way of designating wealth or social standing. The practice of engraving arms contin-





GEOFFROY GOURNET from Easton is a Master Engraver with years of training and experience doing both classic and modern style gun engraving. He specializes in Bulino style engraving, which looks similar to a photograph.

ued when guns were invented and continues to this day.

Hunters often had wildlife engraved on firearms: dangerous game on big-bore rifles and game birds and/or sporting dogs on shotguns. This is just an extension of the early cave drawings depicting the hunt.

Geoffroy Gournet from Easton is a Master Engraver with years of training and experience doing both classic and modern style gun engraving. Gournet came to the states from France in 1985 and became a U.S. citizen in 2000.

Earlier, after two years of college and one of art school, Gournet attended, graduated and received certification from a 3-year gunsmith school in Liege, Belgium. He also apprenticed for a master gunsmith during those three years. Gournet then graduated from a special 2-year engraving school before going to Italy to train under a master engraver for an additional eight months.

Parker Reproductions

About the time Gournet was ready to come to the states, Tom Skeuse, a serious Parker shotgun collector made a deal with Winchester to manufacture Parker Reproduction shotguns at a Japanese plant that Winchester partnered with. For 15 years Gournet engraved fine shotguns for Parker Reproductions.

For the most part, Gournet engraved the firm's "A-1 Special Custom" shotguns, which was the top-of-the-line shotgun made by the original Parker firm, and by the new maker of Parker Reproductions. "Over 15 years I engraved about 80 Parker A-1 Special Custom shotguns," Gournet said. "Parker Reproduction A-1 Specials were engraved in Japan, primarily by machines," he added, "with some hand engraving."

The A-1 Specials, though nice, don't have the same quality of workmanship, or artistry, as the "A-1 Special Custom" shotguns that were hand engraved and signed by Gournet; the latter being clearly superior artistically and aesthetically.

Gournet explained that engraving the early A-1 Special Customs took him approximately a month and a half. "Toward the end it took five or six months to engrave them, as my skill improved and we did more sophisticated work," he said. He related that, "customers demanded more," and that he also engraved larger scenes on the later guns.

"Originally, we did some guns in the traditional Parker style, but we wanted something nicer." He related that customers began requesting Bulino style engraving, which looks similar to a photograph, unlike traditional engraving.

According to Gournet, Bulino engraving is done by "pushing" a short, sharpened piece of steel — a tiny tool, actually — by hand to cut an image into the gun's steel. "Many of the scenes I engraved on the new Parkers were from photos provided by customers," Gournet said. Bulino engraving uses extremely fine strokes, resembling the engraving used to produce currency, only more detailed. Some refer to Bulino engraving as banknote engraving.

Many fine guns are covered in rose and scroll traditional English style engraving. Even when Bulino engraving is used, rose and scroll designs often are used to provide a border. Gournet enjoys mixing engraving styles to satisfy his creative nature.

Gournet stopped working for Parker Reproductions when the firm liquidated its assets to concentrate on its core business. "I also did some minor engraving on parts of Parker Reproduction grade B guns," Gournet said about his time with Parker Reproductions.

The simple shop where Gournet works his artistic magic on steel is lined with art books. While some show traditional wildlife engraving, most are general art references that he uses to keep his work fresh. He works standing at an engraving vise in front of three large windows that provide direct sunlight to illuminate his work. The vise holds the shotgun actions

and steel parts he engraves.

Few tools are needed for engraving. Along with the vise, a couple of tiny hammers and some very small chisel-type tools are used. A couple of Gournet's tools are similar in design to a mechanical lead pencil, with a sharpened metal shaft used for engraving projecting from the body of the tool. As the sharp end is dulled and re-sharpened, it is worn away, but continues being used because, like the lead in the mechanical pencil, the shaft can be lengthened; the shaft is also replaceable.

Engraving is the most important embellishment on a gun because it lasts forever.

A dedicated upland bird hunter, Gournet's personal smoothbore collection includes a Parker Reproduction, an original Fox, a 16-gauge Ideal (French), a 12-gauge Darne (French) and an old, English 12-gauge Blisset. "I shot a Belgian Browning over/under for about 15 years," Gournet said, "but I like old shotguns the best, especially side-by-sides."

Since his time with Parker Reproductions, Gournet freelances his artistic efforts. "I engrave guns for several large firearm/gunsmith firms," he said, "but I also do a lot of engraving work for individual clients." He also engraves knives and other items to fulfill his customers' wishes. "I can obtain Kreighoff guns in the "white" (unblued) for customers who want a totally custom engraved shotgun," Gournet said. He can obtain other makes of shotguns in the "white," too.

Fine engraving is not cheap. Although Gournet does many smaller projects, completely engraving a side-by-side shotgun action on the bottom and both sides, including large, beautifully completed Bulino scenes surrounded by excellent rose and scroll-work like he did on the Parker A-1 Special Custom shotguns, costs a minimum of $5,000 and can go to $20,000.

An interesting aspect, to me at least, is the restoration work Gournet performs on classic firearms. A certified gunsmith, Gournet does only engraving now, and only at a high level as befits his status as a Master Engraver. He can, though, direct mechanical or wood restoration work to fine gunsmiths able to do it.

Gournet would never do a restoration with the idea of turning a low-grade shotgun into a higher-grade gun. Unfortunately, unscrupulous sellers occasionally have guns "upgraded" to pass them off as a high-grade gun, so they can charge more than it is worth. This practice is one outcome of the great interest in collecting early American side-by-side shotguns. As the supply of high-grade guns has decreased drastically, and there were usually not that many in the first place, unsavory types have resorted to illegal and unethical ways to make money from unwary purchasers.

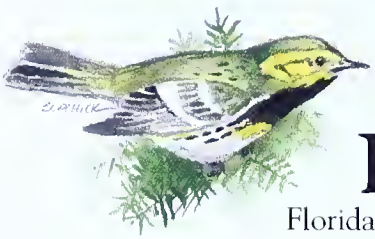
Gournet is an artist, with an artist's temperament, which I mean in a positive way. He will do small engraving jobs, but he will not do inferior engraving work. "I enjoy working with my customers, deciding together how to proceed," Gournet said, "I want to do what they want." That does not, though, include doing less than his best. The French look at things through the telescope of time rather than the way we Americans consider only the "right now."

"Engraving is the most important embellishment on a gun because it lasts forever," Gournet said. While a beautifully engraved shotgun will not make you shoot well, it can make you feel better about missing. □

Fun Game answers:

RUT (A), FAWN (GE), VELVET (GE), BUCK (NE), HUNTING (TI), SPIKE (CS), ANTLERS (NU), GRUNT (TR), DOE (IT), YEARLING (ION)

AGE, GENETICS, NUTRITION



Canopy Rock

LAST WINTER I had the good fortune to visit Myakka River, Florida's largest state park. There you can paddle into a Florida like that known to the Seminole. Marshes conceal basking gators and a maze of canoe routes. Palm forests define the higher ground where massive oaks sprawl and reach, stitching a canopy graced by ferns, pineapple-like air plants and Spanish moss.

Popular at Myakka River is the "Canopy Walk," a man-made wooden trail suspended among the treetops where you can tread for 70 feet through an upper world that humans have seldom seen. On the elevated trail, I thought of our own canopy walks, natural ones, back in the Pennsylvania highlands, and how they, too, offer entry to an upper world.

Climb to the crests of the high Alleghenies anywhere along a hundred-mile arc from the Mason-Dixon Line northeast to near I-80 and you will encounter the mountains' exposed innards. Hard sandstone ledges gird the summits like the splintered bones of a compound fracture, which, in a geological sense, is exactly what they are. Defying 200 million years of rain, frost and wind, the sandstone is the reason the mountains are still here. Sometimes, in the spring when the turkey hunting has been slow, and sometimes when it has not, I have climbed the ledges to take in the view — not of distant valleys, but to see the canopy close at hand, an upper forest, that in less tortured landscapes people must build platforms to know exists.

Spring and early summer is the best time to go high. It is then that the canopy vibrates with life, and the emerging leaves have not yet obscured the show. Birds are the most obvious reward, of kinds you could never see in town or on a farm. Warblers, vireos, tanagers, and some of the thrush and flycatcher tribes; these are the birds of the outermost skin of our highest places, at home in the earth's epidermis. Seen from below they are cold silhouettes, anonymous and aloof. But at eye-level, amid the canopy, with the sun at the right angle, they are a living collage of gold and green, lustrous black and screaming scarlet, with an occasional flash of alluring blue.

Black-and-gold is the most common combination, but just those colors alone occur in a dozen distinct patterns, from the elegant black hood and golden face of the hooded warbler to the rakish sash of the black-throated green.

If this is bird watching, it is not easy bird watching. The subjects are active and quick. They alight, nervously reposition, then flit away. If you're lucky, one may pause to snatch a lime-green caterpillar barely long enough for you to train a binocular. Sharp focus is rare. To know what you are seeing, if that is important, it helps to study a field guide before you go onto the rocks. The action is too fast, and too much is missed, to thumb through pages when these gifts are presented.

But it is not so important to know names for these airy denizens. What is important is to know they are there above us, and that our own native canopy rock affords us a view.

Ben Moyer

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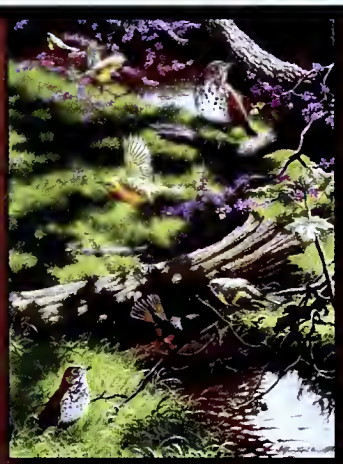




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Working Together for Wildlife



Hemlock Hare

HEMLOCK HARE, by Patrick Sharbaugh is the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. The snowshoe hare frequents the swampland, overgrown with hemlock, rhododendron, willows and alders common in the Pocono Region of northeastern Pennsylvania. The snowshoe brings a little of the Far North right here to the Keystone State.

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(Cover story on p. 25)

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editorial

A decade Later

SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY, but ten years have passed since the Game Commission celebrated its 100th anniversary and was promoting how, over the course of the previous 100 years, Pennsylvania had become one of the top hunting states in the nation. Looking back, with major deer hunting changes, youth-only hunting seasons, the Internet, new wildlife management units, and the first bobcat and elk season offered in decades, the past ten years may go down as the most eventful decade in the agency's existence.

Just a few highlights:

1995

- In-lieu-of-tax payment rate doubled by legislature to $1.20 per acre.

1996

- First youth squirrel hunt and youth waterfowl hunt offered.
- Pennsylvania joined 15 other states to become part of the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). All states were involved by 1998.

1997

- The agency debuted its own website, offering six primary links: "Publications," "County Information," "News Room," "License Information," "Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits," and "About the PGC."
- Toll-free telephone numbers set up to take credit card orders for *Game News* subscriptions and other publications and items.

1998

- Juniors allowed to hunt antlerless deer during the two Saturdays of "buck" season
- Governor's Hunting Heritage Symposium held in Hershey (see July and Dec. '98 *Game News*).
- Pheasant band study begun — about a third of 6,770 banded pheasants released carried reward bands, $5 to $400. Overall, hunters reported 77 percent of birds harvested; $101,630 in rewards were paid out; and the agency learned a great deal on how to improve the pheasant stocking program.
- License fee increase passed, taking effect in 1999-2000.

1999

- Vern Ross named executive director.
- Rules for disabled hunters: adopted regulations allowing hunters with certain disabilities to use ATVs on designated game lands roads.
- "Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies" video released, and went on to capture several national awards.
- Announced plans to hire a full-time webmaster.
- New deer management section created, headed by Dr. Gary Alt.
- Link program launched, to "link" hunters with landowners experiencing problems caused by wildlife.

2000

- Voluntary bowhunter education course unveiled, to help bowhunters of all skill

levels to become better, and to satisfy the course requirements in other states.

- CREP approved and implemented in 20 counties in Susquehanna River basin.
- 3-day antlerless deer season opens on the last Saturday of the regular firearms season.
- Early statewide muzzleloader season.
- The first time since 1969, bobcats could be hunted and trapped: 290 permits were drawn from 3,274 applications received. 58 bobcats were taken, 45 by trappers and 13 by hunters.
- Fawn study launched, to determine birth dates, pregnancy rates, and productivity of different age classes of female deer, and to evaluate fawn mortality.
- *Game News* goes online.
- New agency logo was adopted, designed by Bob Sopchick.
- New, magazine-size digest published. Including paid advertising saved $80,000 in printing and distribution costs.
- Game Commission begins selling hunting and furtaker licenses online, through "The Outdoor Shop" at the agency's website.

2001

- First elk season in 70 years: 27 of the 30 license holders took elk.
- October antlerless season for junior and senior hunters, persons permitted to use a motor vehicle for hunting, and residents serving on active military duty.
- Concurrent antlered and antlerless deer seasons.
- Mid-December small game season, between the end of deer season and Christmas.
- Home-study hunter education course approved for implementation.
- *Game News* put on most major newsstands throughout the state and in out-of-state communities bordering Pennsylvania.

2002

- Buck study launched, designed to study the dispersal and survival of male deer.
- New antler restrictions implemented, to develop a more natural ratio of males and females.
- New bear season, in northeast, concurrent with first week of regular firearms deer season.
- Youth pheasant season, held concurrently with the youth squirrel season.

2003

- New game lands regulations to protect wildlife and wildlife management activities.
- New, ecologically based wildlife management units approved.
- Youth spring gobbler season set for 2004.

2004

- 75th anniversary of *Game News*.
- Use of crossbows allowed in any firearms deer season.

2005

- *Game News* goes full color.
- DMAP harvest reports accepted online, and legislation was passed, clearing the way for the agency to develop procedures for the online reporting of other game.
- 2-bird spring gobbler season set for 2006, 39 years after spring turkey hunting was first offered here.
- Doe study begun.



The Allegheny Wilderness

By Cindy Ross

I TRAMP through a forest so thick and spongy my feet cannot penetrate to nor touch hard ground. Gigantic downed trees force me to get on all fours to climb over them. Tiny hemlock and birch trees are growing from the moss-covered backs of many of these fallen giants, feeding on them, using them as protection, a refuge, a natural nursery. I'm forced to stop in my tracks, sit down by one such "nurse log" and contemplate what exactly is occurring here.

My walking companion, Kirk Johnson, who is Executive Director of the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW), suggests that we take a break from our cross-country exploring in the Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Area in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF). We have been trampling through this extremely rare, 4,100-acre pocket of native old growth containing 500-year-old, 40-inch diameter, eastern hemlocks that tower 125 feet above the forest floor.

The Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Area shelters the largest old-growth forest in the eastern U.S. between the Great Smoky Mountains and the Adirondacks. Representing some of the last virgin forests, it lies within a day's drive of tens of millions of Americans. Here, by this nurse log, is a great place to talk about the benefits of this area and a proposal to classify it and other areas of the ANF as the "Allegheny Wilderness."

We tend to think of death as the end of production and value. Some believe that when a tree's vigor deteriorates, so does its ability to provide benefits. But in the old growth forest, we've learned, that downed giant trees are some of the most valuable elements of this ecosystem.

Decomposing nurse logs provide a moist elevated, pile of fertilizer — an

ideal environment and a tremendous source of nourishment on which seeds and sprouts can grow and thrive. These tiny seeds do not have to compete on the forest floor with faster growing seedlings, be smothered by leaf litter, nor succumb to fungus pathogens of which they are very susceptible. Nurse logs provide greater warmth, longer snow-free periods, and act as a "savings account" of nutrients as they are recycled back into the soil. Because many nurse trees are huge, an entire line of mature trees can be found growing along the path of where a nurse log that has since rotted away used to lie. In some forest systems, nurse logs are the only place where new woody plants are able to get a start.

Holding moisture like sponges, nurse logs are vital to the survival of amphibians, such as wood frogs. They provide hiding places for squirrels and songbirds, drumming sites for grouse, preening sites for birds, places for turtles and other amphibians and reptiles to sun, and runways for mice and voles. In the northeastern U.S., 23 species of amphibians and reptiles take refuge in decaying wood.

Nurse logs play a key role in forest food webs by providing cover, thermal protection and egg-laying sites for centipedes, beetles, fungi and ants which, in turn, are fed upon by skunks, bears, woodpeckers and a host of other animals.

Large trees that fall into streams play a critical role in aquatic environments. They diversify habitat by creating deep pools, shady areas and shelter, thereby supporting a greater variety of fish, invertebrates, plant life and other organisms. And in an old growth forest, these are the benefits of just nurse logs. Being in a special place like an old growth forest feeds your soul, which is an extremely important consideration in our fast-paced, empty-feeling, materialistic world.

The Wilderness Act defines a wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." There is a different kind of peace that exudes from a forest such as this, a quietness, a sacredness. It's obvious here that the planet thrives when the natural cycle of life is allowed to go on without man's interference. We need wilderness areas: We need places that remind us that we are not the only species on earth.

Kirk Johnson hails from Bradford, PA, and just a few years ago he wrote his masters thesis essay — for Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington — on the ANF. It was entitled, "A Sleeping Giant — Recreational and Ecological Potential on the Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania." It was good timing.

By law, approximately every 15 years, each national forest must examine its resource management plan. In this upcoming year, important decisions will be made regarding future land use within the ANF. Although the United States has vast wilderness areas, only two-tenths of 1 percent are found in the Northeast. Johnson spearheaded the grassroots, non-profit organization, Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, and with its 900-strong membership, the group is working to ensure that increased wilderness protection is a priority in the upcoming land-use plans for the ANF.

The ANF is broken up into management areas. When doing his land evaluation survey, Johnson was very deliberate and careful of which areas were recommended for wilderness status. He specifically avoided significant timber areas, ATV trails, developed campgrounds,

anything that would conflict with wilderness standards. He was surprised to discover that when the final analysis was finished, 54,000 acres (roughly 10 percent of the ANF) were suitable.

Sportsmen will be glad to know that a wilderness designation does not limit hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and other forms of non-motorized recreation.

Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness are soliciting public input, and clubs should write letters of recommendation to the National Forest Service and members of Congress in support of this wilderness proposal. "The Record of Decision," the final environmental impact decision, could occur in 2006.

Kirk and I finish our break by the nurse log and pick our way down the slope towards East Fork Run, a tributary of Tionesta Creek. Along the stream bank stand the largest sleeping giants. Their massive, maroon-colored trunks rise like cathedral columns. Not a branch is in sight until 50 feet up in the forest canopy. Nurse logs are everywhere. Kirk shows me a 46-inch diameter eastern hemlock along the bank, the largest tree in the Tionesta old growth tract. I attempt to encircle it with my arms and wonder at all the events it has lived through on this planet.

Kirk points out a "tree dam," where a downed tree created a dammed pool. A Clarion University student studying the native brook trout here in 1998 discovered that while the numbers were not as





Tree seeds landing on NURSE LOGS such as this one, left, have a higher chance of surviving. In the ANF, it isn't uncommon to find several mature trees that once shared a nurse log growing in a row, above.

high as in second and third growth forests — where streams run clear, without obstacles and variations — trout here grew to be huge. The ANF contains a wide variety of animals. In fact, there are five threatened or endangered species, including the bald eagle, that make their home in or near the ANF.

Typically, a dozen different research projects are going on at any given time in this forest. Many universities, including Cornell, Penn State, Yale School of Forestry, Clarion U, as well of dozens of other schools have used the Tionesta Natural Area to conduct studies, resulting in more than 100 scientific papers. It is all passive research, and some are long-term studies of the old growth that have been going on for 40 consecutive years.





KIRK JOHNSON, Executive Director of the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, pauses to take in the magnitude of the ANF.

The concept of the Tionesta Wilderness, one area being proposed by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, is to create a 15,000-acre wilderness area surrounding and including the Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Area, which would encompass and buffer this important grove. The Tionesta tract presently has no statutory protection. Currently, this area has proposed timber sales and is being drilled for oil, both activities that threaten the integrity of the forest.

The Campaign for America's Wilderness, a national organization, singled out the proposed Tionesta Wilderness Area to be included in its report, "Wild, for How Long? Twelve Treasures in Trouble." Friends are not trying to halt logging in the national forest, just protect the old growth that remains and reduce and eliminate some threats. In addition to the Tionesta Wilderness being proposed by Friends, seven other areas totaling 39,000 acres areas are also being proposed for wilderness designation.

From Tionesta Natural Area, we walk on the National Scenic North Country Trail (NCT) in the

Tionesta Scenic Area, the northern portion of the old-growth tract. With, when completed, a proposed length of 4,000 miles, from North Dakota to New York, this trail holds the potential for being the nation's finest long distance footpath.

Other national scenic trails, such as the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail, passes through 24 wilderness areas; the Pacific Crest Trail and the Continental Divide Trail each travel through more than 30. The North Country Trail, however, passes through only three, small wilderness areas along its entire length. The wilderness experience is grossly underrepresented where this trail traverses the ANF.

As a professional long-distance hiker, I have hiked all three of the previously mentioned trails in their entirety, and can say from experience, Tionesta holds some of the prettiest forest in all of America. We do have the opportunity to increase and permanently establish that wilderness resource along the NCT.

The next day, Kirk takes me to Rimrock Overlook and Jake's Rocks on the Allegheny Reservoir to show me more proposed wilderness areas. The uncommon Virginia Pine grows here, and in the proposed Chestnut Ridge Wilderness the American chestnut is doing well. This area has no manmade trails, so we explore by simply following the contours of the land, hugging the ridge.

We weave along a deer trail amongst moss-covered rocks and blueberry bushes and begin to spot American chestnut trees. The 20-year-old trees reaching 9 to12 inches in diameter are not yet affected by the killing blight. In one area, we find a dozen trees within a 25-yard radius. The trees that have begun to die from the blight are already sending up sucker shoots. These trees will invariably produce fruit that is susceptible to the blight.

The hope of perpetuating the species and allowing it to come back hinges on allowing forest areas like Chestnut Ridge, where chestnut trees are still reaching a relatively large size, to remain unhindered by human encroachment. Designating places such as Chestnut Ridge a wilderness area will give the chestnut a fighting chance to survive and prosper.

On our walk out, Kirk mentions that the town of Tionesta so happens to be the homeland of Howard Zahniser, the author of the National Wilderness Preservation System Act of 1964. Forty years ago this act began to protect 107 million acres of wilderness on federal lands across the country. If we, as citizens, let it be known that we favor a small part of this vast national forest to be designated as wilderness, we could leave a unique wilderness experience for future generations of hunters, fishermen, backpackers and others to enjoy. Nurse logs nourish and feed future generations, we can choose to leave a legacy for our children and feed their souls, which is of no less importance than food, water and shelter. □

Contact Friends of Allegheny Wilderness at 220 Center Street, Warren, PA 16365. 814-723-0620, **alleghenyfriends@earthlink.net** or **www.pawild.org**. Mr. William J. Connelly, Forest Planner for the Allegheny National Forest can be reached at P.O. Box 36, Warren, PA 16365 or **r9_anf_fpr@fs.fed.us**.



Pete

By C. Dennis Ziegler

"HEY, Denny, how ya doin'? I got you a beagle, for free. You can get him when you come up in August. He's a little overweight, but he will cold trail and run snowshoes by himself."

That call came in 1991, from Rick Wood. Rick worked at a paper mill in Old Town, Maine, and also held a guide's license there. A coworker at the mill had wanted a snowshoe dog, and purchased Pete sight unseen from a well-known kennel in Ohio. Four hundred dollars seemed a little pricey for a beagle, and when Jeff's shift had been changed to 12-hour days, he never got the chance to work with Pete. Jeff's mother felt sorry for the dog, tied outside all the time, so she frequently brought Pete inside, feeding him and letting him lie on the sofa.

Jeff had asked Rick if he and his partner from Birch Bogg Guides, Mark Estes, would take Pete and run him with their pack of beagles. So Pete's new address became Alton, Maine, and Pete's second year was spent running with a pack of nine dogs.

Traveling to Maine to hunt snowshoes for the first time in March of 1990, I had such a great hunt that before I got home a return trip was

planned for that fall. During the two days we hunted, the dogs had close to 50 chases. Snowshoe sign was everywhere, and the first day I shot four with my Contender. Day two started with rain and rising temperatures in the mid-40s.

The first hare I missed looked like a drowned rat, as the rain came down in sheets. I was laughing so hard when the hare ran by, my concentration was off and the 3/4-ounce load of 6s kicked up snow behind the bounding hare. I holstered the Contender and decided that unless the hares stopped and sat in front of me, four would suffice for this trip. None ever did.

In the fall of 1990 I made the trip with Rich Rodney and Tom Lanning. We had the best woodcock hunting I've ever had, with my Lab, Betsy, flushing more than 400 woodcock in five days. Rick was amazed at our prowess with our Contenders. Limits of woodcock were taken daily, and five snowshoes and six grouse were added to the bag.

In August of 1991, Pete came home with me. A typical tri-colored beagle, he took up residence in a newly built and insulated dog coop out under the towering white pines near my home.



Every evening Pete and I would chase some cottontails, and he never missed a beat. His extra weight rolled right off, and by mid-September he was in his running prime.

I had been telling anyone who cared to listen about Pete, and over the Labor Day weekend we went to a farm in Columbia County with Nevin Dressler and his son Jared to run Pete. Six chases later, an astonished Nevin couldn't believe his ears when I called to Pete and he came without hesitation.

Now the tough part would be leaving either Betsy or Pete behind. Betsy was our inside companion, and when she saw me in my hunting clothes, she would go berserk with excitement. Pete was more laid back, even when he watched me load Betsy for a day of grouse hunting. I taught Pete that "get in the coop" meant I didn't want to hear it from him or else he'd get the broom brushed on his backside.

When I wanted to hunt rabbits, I'd fool Betsy by putting my gun and my coat on another porch, and I'd leave from there. When Betsy found out that I went without her, she'd lie by the door and whine.

The local rabbit hunters told me it was a rare dog that could make the transition from cottontails to snowshoes and back again. They insisted that because Maine had so few deer, Pete would find the abundant deer scent here so overwhelming he'd need a shock collar to keep him straight. They worried needlessly, though, as Pete stayed straight as a taunt string line on a mason's block wall.

Having two different types of hunting dogs created a wonderful problem for me. I hunted Betsy for the first six weeks of the grouse season, and then Pete got his turn the day after Christmas. Lining up partners for every day of

snowshoe season was never a problem.

Pete put the hammer to every snowshoe he started. Some of the chases were only a half an hour, but others lasted up to three. On the day after Christmas in 1991, with the temperature at 15 below, Pete started a snowshoe without barking. I knew by his body language that he was on a hare, and I told Jesse Shingler not to move. One shot from his 12-gauge at 10 yards and his first Pennsylvania snowshoe was in the bag. The next day Pete and I, along with Rich Rodney, started one at 7:30, in an old lakebed being reclaimed by huckleberries and white birch. Black spruce filled in the open spaces with a scattering of hemlocks. Soft maples and yellow birches of various heights ringed the perimeter of the lakebed.

Having two different types of hunting dogs, a beagle and a bird dog, created a wonderful problem.

It was snowing and the wind was howling out of the north. Unfazed by the weather, Pete started to cold trail, barking every 10 seconds. The barks changed to a steady chop, and then, finally, to a steady bawl. The chase was on, and by the distance being gained by the hare, I knew it was a buck (male) hare. The chase music was wiped out by the steady wind. Half an hour went by, and as Richie and I listened, coming from the east, we could hear Pete's steady bark. The hare turned south, jumping back and forth across a stream, trying to elude Pete. Then the hare did a figure eight and ran on its backtrack, but Pete's consistent chop and bawl told us the hare was not winning the chase.

Unexpectedly, Rich's Mossberg spoke, but the sound was swept away by the steady wind. Richie ran more than 30 yards to claim his prize, and held up high the ghost of the north woods. Pete's direction, however, was going away from us, when the realization set in that Richie had killed a stray, not the hare Pete was running.

Pete had closed the distance to 60 yards, as they both found solid footing on snow-covered ice. Now the hare was pulling away from Pete; the chase had come full circle. This big hare was holding the pedal to the metal when he broke into an opening about 60 yards to my left. Suddenly, almost in midstride, he changed direction and then stopped in a clump of huckleberries on a small hummock in the lakebed. I guessed the distance at 40 yards, pretty far for my .410 Contender with a 10-inch barrel. This, however, was the opportunity I had been waiting for, all those hours of practice and time working up the 3/4-ounce loads of 6s.

Pete's incessant chop had the hare on the move again, and when it launched itself from its hiding spot, I found a window and swung ahead by five feet. I flat out missed, my shot pattern rattling the huckleberries behind it. Pete chased that elusive hare for two more hours, but the hare never again showed in an opening. After that, telling which way it had gone was nearly impossible, because of all the doubling back it had done.

The next day, Bruce Titter shot a medium-size hare with his 20-gauge on the first go-round, and the day after that, I shot my first of the year. The hare appeared suddenly, as I was facing the other way, listening to Pete cold trail. I caught a flash of white out of the corner of my eye and instinctively cocked the Contender in the same motion, as I held the little shotgun out at arm's length. The hare was within 15 yards, so I blotted out its head and slapped the trigger. The hare rolled to a stop, and I reloaded with-

out hesitation. (The limit was two hares a day then.)

Never moving my feet, I turned 90 degrees and another one came my way. The hare spotted me and was gone in a flash. After one and a half hours, the hare struck out on a straight line, heading for a swamp two miles to the east. Pete came back and I met him in a hemlock thicket two miles in from the road. "Hey, Pete, come here," I yelled, and he ran over and sat on my snowshoes. His paws had solid ice between and around his pads, so I put him on his lead and tied him to a tree. Taking off my snowshoes and using one as a shovel, I cleared the 18 inches of snow down to the bare ground and started a fire. Pete sat with me and thawed out his feet, while helping me eat my lunch. An hour and a half later, with his feet vastly improved, we headed for another swamp. The unfortunate part of the next chase was that the prey was brown instead of white. The cottontail stopped in his tracks when the Contender spoke, and Pete finished the chase by retrieving the rabbit. Amazingly, he brought it over and dropped it at my feet.



When I got home, a package from Rick Wood was waiting for me. In the small box was a nice brass bell; Rick thought it would help me keep track of Pete in the vast swamps of northeastern Pennsylvania.

The next day was our last that year. Ten below zero and full sunlight made for a beautiful day of hunting, but a lousy day of chasing. Tom Lanning and I walked two miles to another swamp on the north side of Briskey Mountain. The new bell added a soft tinkling to the last chase that year. Pete stayed on a hare until quitting time, but it eluded us, giving only glimpses once in a while.

Two days later Pete and I were back on the track of woodland cottontails, and he made the transition without a hitch. We ran every day, regardless of weather, and had a great time with the cottontails. Pete's only lament was that these rabbits would go to ground all too often without even a full circle chase. He'd run the track back, searching for a jump-off spot, but never finding one.

The last week of the season Bruce and I went to an old overgrown apple orchard to hunt. Pete was out in front of us, cold trailing, when the bell stopped, and then we saw him coming toward us with something in his mouth. Dropping a predator-killed frozen rabbit at my feet made me realize that the $400 Jeff had paid for Pete was well worth it.

Mature apple trees, unpruned for 40 years, with briars growing between them and interspersed with gray dogwoods made this prime winter rabbit cover. Downed apple trees and freshly broken branches showed white from the teeth of hungry rabbits. Bruce stood by a spring-seep with some groundhog holes behind him. Pete waded into that cover and had one going immediately. My .410 Contender barked and my first cottontail was in the bag.

Pete started another immediately, and from my vantage point I saw three rabbits running in front of him. They ran together for 50 yards before breaking into singles. With Pete's bawls coming closer, I spotted a brown speedball angling away from me at 40 yards. At the report of the .410, Bruce

yelled that it was too far. Pete got back on the second rabbit and off they went up the hill toward Bruce. His 20-gauge sounded like thunder next to the pop of my Contender. When I held up the rabbit for Bruce to see, his retort was, "No way, man, no way."

Pete came down the hill and followed the third rabbit to a hole. Bruce looked for the rabbit he'd shot at, but found only the shot wad. After hanging the rabbits by their heads in forked saplings, I got Pete started on the last rabbit of the season. This bunny jumped a small creek and attempted to elude Pete. Pete, however, didn't need to go in the water as I watched him with his nose held high, running downwind of the rabbit by 15 feet. Knowing where the nearest groundhog hole was located was helpful in bagging this bunny. When it came over the knoll running straight at me, I held low and in front. At the shot, it somersaulted. Pete retrieved and laid it at my feet.

What a prize this beagle was and, did I mention, for free, too. We collected the bunnies, and with three bunnies and Pete, my hands were quite full. That evening after taking care of the rabbits and Pete, I called Rick Wood in Maine and told him about Pete's first year hunting in Pennsylvania. I asked him to thank Jeff and tell him that Pete adjusted just fine to life in Luzerne County. Finally I had a snowshoe dog. Thanks, guys. □

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Unfinished Business

Carrying on the Tradition of Ned Smith and His Art

By Kermit Henning

NED SMITH left a tremendous void in the world of wildlife art when he passed away in 1985. After a 46-year career as an artist, illustrator and writer, during which he earned international acclaim, Ned created literally thousands of drawings, paintings and illustrations for magazines, books and other publications. Added to this are dozens of paintings published as limited edition prints, which may be what Ned is perhaps best known for today.

Ned's first sale was in 1939, a cover painting for the *PA Angler* magazine. In 1948 Ned began doing artwork for the Game Commission, and in 1950 he was hired by the Game Commission as staff illustrator, a position he held until 1953. After leaving state employment, Ned continued to do artwork for the Game Commission, painting more than a hundred covers for *Game News*, along with illustrating countless inside features. In the 1960s, Ned began writing and illustrating his famous *Game News* column "Gone for the Day." These monthly columns, which documented Ned's days afield, were pub-

lished in book form in 1971. This magnificent look into the mind and heart of Smith as naturalist, nature lover, keen observer, as well as accomplished artist, remains the top-selling book ever published by the Game Commission. Because of his reputation as the state's premier wildlife artist, as well as the name recognition to collectors of fine art, Ned was chosen to produce the first Pennsylvania Waterfowl stamp, in 1983.

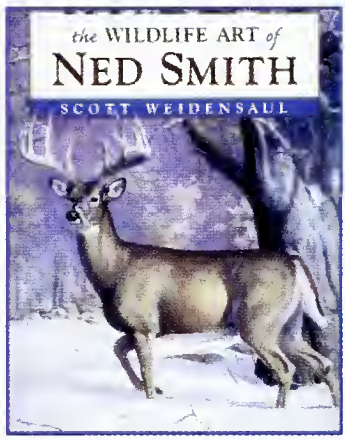
His sudden death in 1985, at age 65, cut short years of unfinished business. Smith had hunted in the western Rockies, and just a few years prior to his death, made a trip to the Canadian Rockies. To speculate on the future of Ned's works would be impossible, but two works on his easel at the time of his death give us a clue. He was just starting a series of prints to showcase wildlife outside the more familiar Eastern United States.

The image of a magnificent Rocky Mountain elk herd was one of two unfinished paintings on Smith's easel at the time of his death. This rutting bull, after collecting his harem of cows, has his work cut out for him as he begins the unfinished business of mating and protecting his cows.

Under close scrutiny, the cows in the front are under painted, the meadow grass in the foreground and the trees at the forest's edge are all loosely painted — waiting for that familiar finishing detail that only Ned could paint. However, typical of most master artists, Smith never left any

The Wildlife Art of Ned Smith

By Scott Weidensaul



Finally, a single source that showcases the entire range of Ned Smith's art, *The Wildlife Art of Ned Smith*, is the first book to highlight the paintings, watercolors, line drawings, and pencil sketches of the late artist.

Working primarily as an illustrator for most of his 46-year career, the majority of Ned's work was published in hundreds of books, magazines, and other publications as far back as the late 1950s and, thus, has never been seen by the public. Indeed, most Ned Smith fans know him only by the prints published in the last nine years of his life.

Award-winning author Scott Weidensaul, a founding member of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, and a close friend of Ned and Marie Smith, has compiled over 100 stunning images as well as provided a close look at the artist himself. Go along with Ned as he roams the hills and valleys, the forests and fields; see the initial working field sketches and follow them to the finished art. Spend time with him and get to know Ned Smith the naturalist, the observer, and the accomplished biologist as well as artist.

For the serious art collector to anyone who enjoys nature and the beauty of the outdoors, *The Wildlife Art of Ned Smith* is a must-have volume.

Collector editions, embossed with the logo of the Center and autographed by the artist are available for $47.64 (postpaid) from: Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, P. O. Box 33, 176 Water Company Road, Millersburg, PA 17061, 717-692-3699, or online at www.nedsmithcenter.org.



Perhaps one of the last photos taken of NED SMITH, here he works in his studio on a painting he never finished. The work was later titled *Unfinished Business* (top right) by Frank Felbaum, a founding member of NSCNA, after Ned's passing.

area of the painting totally undone. There are no areas completely unpainted, as the image was just days from completion. The title "Unfinished Business," was chosen by Frank Felbaum, founding member and second president of

Coming Events

May 26 - September 2 – "Ned Smith: A Lifetime in Art" A continuing exhibition of the largest collection of Ned Smith art ever assembled in one place. Approximately 70 works by Ned Smith will be displayed, including many pieces never before seen by the public. NSCNA Olewine Gallery, Millersburg.

July 29, 30 – Ned Smith Center Nature and Arts Festival, MYO Park, Millersburg. Friday, beginning at 6:30, enjoy the music of the Wiconisco Pickers and marvel at the informative program of John "The Mothman" Laskowski. All day Saturday, over 60 programs on a wide variety of nature topics for people of all ages.

September 9 through December – Exhibit of all the original art used for the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Trout Stamp designs. NSCNA Olewine Gallery, Millersburg. Visit ww.nedsmithcenter.org for updated events.

September 16 – Trustees Celebrity Sporting Clays Championship at the Hillendale Hunt Club in Tyrone. Proceeds to benefit the Center. Call (717) 692-3699 for details.

January through May, 2006 – Pennsylvania Artist Exhibit

the board of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art (NSCNA), and it perfectly represents the image. Selected as the 10th in the series of annual prints for the Center, "Unfinished Business" also speaks to the mission of the Center, initially established to house the tremendous collection of art of Smith's widow, Marie.

After Ned's death, Marie began searching for a safe haven to store and protect her collection of paintings, drawings and memorabilia. Initial contacts were made with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, which had purchased hundreds of original drawings and paintings from Ned. Carnegie, however, could not guarantee that the collection would not be split up or sold. With the help of Smith family friends, Scott Weidensaul and John Strawbridge — accomplished artists themselves — an outpouring of support was found in Millersburg and the surrounding communities to keep the collection close to home and available to the public. Plans soon escalated to developing not only a home for the art, but also a place where the legacy of Ned Smith could be continued. Donations of money and land poured in, among them a tremendous gesture by the Millersburg Water Authority. The authority made available 250 acres along the Wiconisco Creek just east of Millersburg, which has become home for the Center. Additional gifts of land brought the total to over 500 acres along the creek and on Berry's Mountain — a favorite spot for Ned Smith's ramblings and inspirations.

The NSCNA was officially founded in 1993, and on what would have been Ned's 78th birthday, his widow Marie signed an agreement to donate the entire $1.5 million collection to the Center. Plans began immediately to erect a building — not only to house the collection, but also to provide a center that would offer lectures, field trips and seminars, as well as foster the arts and showcase contemporary artists and photographers from around the country.

Marie's death in 2002 prevented her from seeing the fruition of her dream, the grand opening of the Sourbeer and Lick Education building on October 9, 2004, housing gallery space, offices, a gift shop and classroom space. A fulltime naturalist is now on staff, and the Center now offers educational programs and special events to school groups and the public.

As far as the Center has progressed in a short time, there is still much unfinished business. According to Executive Director Jerry Regan, "Our mission now is to introduce an entire new generation to Ned Smith and the outdoors. Our focus will shift to programs and outreach, no longer on buildings." Plans call for the erection of a 240-foot pedestrian bridge over the creek, expansion of the hiking trails throughout the property, a wheelchair-accessible nature trail, and a "sculpture trail," which will blend both nature and art. "We need to share the outdoors with the public, just as Ned did in his paintings and writings."

The popular print and patch program, a major source of funding for the NSCNA, has been extremely successful. Each year a different Ned Smith print is offered for sale, along with a 4-inch embroidered patch. Most years are sold out, and collectors eagerly anticipate each new print. This year's "Unfinished Business" will be embossed with the seal of the Center to guarantee authenticity. Future plans call for including other artists in the program, widening the scope of bringing nature through art to the public.

Unfinished business — the instinct of the majestic elk, the legacy and works of the late Ned Smith, and the future of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. Focusing on the future with a look to the past, bringing nature and the arts together in harmony on the familiar lands that Ned Smith loved. □

The Heart of the Hunter

By Mervin R. Zimmerman

ON A WARM HUMID DAY in late August 2000, I found myself with my father on a steep hill in one of our favorite hunting areas. We were scouting for archery season, something we had done together for many years. This year, however, would prove to be different, very different. It soon turned into a year that would forever change my view on the meaning of the hunt.

My earliest memories of hunting are very fond. It seems like just yesterday when my dad's hunting buddies would arrive at our house in a 1960-something pickup. They'd all be dressed in "fashion," T-shirts, high-water blue jeans with white socks showing, and long sideburns. They wouldn't waste any time loading up the gear: recurve bows and cedar shaft arrows that had brightly colored fletching and long, slender glue-on broadheads.

I was so anxious to be included in these adventures that it seemed to take forever. Now, as I look back over the past 28 seasons I've had the privilege of sharing not only with my father but with my two sons and daughter as well, I wonder where the time has gone. But I know it's been good.

As we were making our way up the hill, I noticed Dad was stopping to rest more often than usual. He seemed to be short of breath and was bending over every time we stopped. Several times I asked if he was all right, and each time he answered with a hearty, "I'm fine, just a little tired."

What he wasn't telling me was that he was experiencing chest pain and that breathing had become difficult. Unknown to anyone else, he had been having this pain for several weeks whenever he mowed the yard or worked hard.

A few days after our scouting trip, he was helping my son deliver the evening papers. This is not hard work, but does require a lot of walking, and once again he felt the pain in his chest, but this time it was worse. So the next day, he called his doctor. Hearing his symptoms, the doctor wanted to see him right away. Tests revealed that he had some severe blockage in his arteries. He was instructed not to return to work or exert himself in any way. Surgery would be scheduled as soon as possible. Two weeks later, Dad had double bypass surgery, and a couple days later he was back home and recovering very well.

Archery season that year was very different from others. I had gotten used to Dad hunting with one of my sons, and I would be in another location with the other. Now, with my son on junior tags, the three of us were hunting together. I was having trouble focusing on the hunt. I found myself wondering about Dad and if he'd ever be able to get back out in the field and hunt with us again.

By the time gun season arrived, Dad was doing quite well, and by the time doe season rolled around, the doctor told Dad he could go as long as he used a handgun, because his chest wasn't healed enough to handle the recoil of a rifle. Should he connect, he'd also need someone to drag out his deer. My sons and I were ready, but more importantly, we just wanted to get him back

out to share the adventure of the hunt.

Back on the same hill that just a few weeks earlier had proven to be a challenge, Dad didn't see a deer that day, but he said it was great just to be out there. His doctors told him he was very fortunate he'd paid attention to his symptoms and sought help before a heart attack occurred. Had he not, recovery would have been much more difficult. Yes, he did miss a season, but now he has the opportunity to enjoy many more seasons with his grandsons and me.



We hunt a lot differently now. We always have walkie-talkies and check in with each other often. We take more time to enjoy each other and make sure we are making memories. The hunt is more than the harvest, it is the time spent with family and friends. I'm in the habit now of asking Dad, "How are you feeling? Do you have your nitroglycerin pills?"

Dad complains that we worry too much about him and don't let him hunt on his own. He says sometimes he feels like a burden. We all assure him that is not what we think. We're just glad he can still come along and enjoy a day afield.

In 2001 both my sons harvested deer in the junior doe season and I got a doe in archery. By the last week of gun season, Dad was beginning to think he couldn't see deer anymore. He was anxious to harvest one and get some closure to his experience. It was Saturday, the last day of the season, and Dad and I were hunting on ridges about a mile apart. He called me on his radio to let me know he had reached his spot and was settled at his stand well before daylight. Around 8:45 he called again, to report that he had not seen anything and was going to head back to the truck. As it was a nice day, I encouraged him to hang in there until at least 10 o'clock. He agreed.

Before 9 a.m. my radio crackled and I heard Dad say, "I just shot a buck and I'm getting off my stand to check it out." A few minutes later he confirmed he had a nice 4-point. I told him to

come and get me and I would drag the deer for him, but he insisted he needed to do it himself.

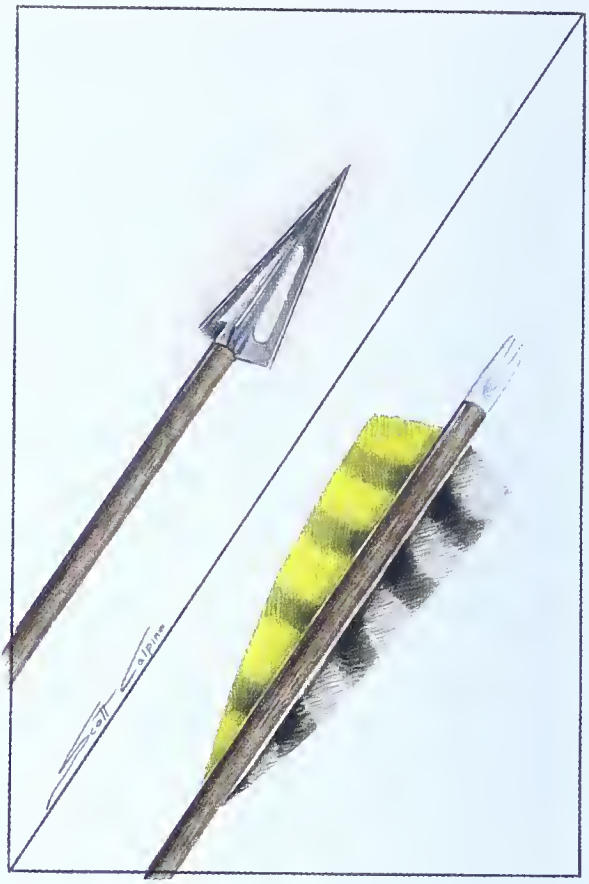
"Besides, I feel good," he said.

So I stayed on stand and he checked in by radio every couple of minutes. Finally he arrived at the truck. He said he was still feeling good so he was going to the store to get some ice to put in the deer. Then he would pick me up. I would stay on my stand until he got back.

Several minutes later, I couldn't believe my eyes. A nice buck came out the ridge. I recall thinking how unforgettable it would be for both of us to harvest bucks on the last day of the season, only a year after Dad's open-heart surgery.

The buck turned, headed right down past my stand, stepped into a clearing and I fired. About that time, my radio crackled again. It was Dad letting me know he was back from the store. I told him it would take me a little while to get down, because I would be dragging a nice 8-point.

He could hardly believe it, and before long he appeared, anxious to help me get my trophy out of the woods.



Always remember, the hunt is not about the kill. It's about the time we get to share with friends and family and the memories we make all along the way that are important. These, at least, are the things that I've learned make the hunt successful for me. □

Woodchuck Soup

Ingredients:

1 woodchuck	1 tablespoon salt
2 medium sliced onions	1 teaspoon pepper
2 diced carrots	1 teaspoon garlic salt
2 celery stalks, diced	2 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon parsley flakes	1 pound box medium egg noodles

Prepare chuck by cleaning and washing. Quarter meat and put in a medium pot, adding ingredients. Cover and cook at medium heat until meat is tender (about two hours). When done, remove meat and cool. Strip meat off bones and return to pot. Add noodles and cook until they are done. Remove from heat and serve.

From Pennsylvania Game Cookbook, available from the Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Cost is $4.72 plus tax, delivered.



Megan

By Tom Deitzer

I AM a lifelong resident of Wyoming County, and have had several pets in my life, most of them dogs, but there has never been as close a companion as Megan.

I grew up near Lake Winola and we always had a dog in the family. They were beagles or mixed hounds, and with the exception of very cold nights, they stayed outdoors. None of them excelled in hunting; they were just pets, and there never seemed to be a close bond between the dogs and the rest of my family.

When I became an adult and moved out on my own I cared for two Irish setters, a male and female. I took ownership of the male, Cinnamon, as a puppy, and he lived with me for several years. He was an inside dog and a good watchdog, but was never interested in hunting, even though I took him along each season to hunt pheasants and grouse. The female, Princess, was given to me by a family member. She was a great dog and a wonderful companion, but she had no desire to hunt.

We met Megan as a 4-week-old puppy when a co-worker told me that her dog had a litter of yellow and black labs. Our daughter, Heather, had her 12th birthday coming up, and she had been asking my wife and me if she could have a puppy for her birthday. I surprised her one evening when I asked her if she'd like to go for a ride with me to "scout for turkeys." It seemed a little strange to her, because that wasn't common for us to do, but she went along and we did even see a large flock of turkeys as we drove along. When I pulled into my friend's driveway, Heather looked confused, but I asked her to join me for a moment while I spoke with my friend. When we opened the garage

door Heather saw 10 puppies. She looked up at me and I told her, "Go ahead and pick one, but we have to leave it here with its mother for a few more weeks."

After cuddling each one of them she chose the only female, a yellow one, and naturally, it was the runt. Young children often choose the smallest, cutest puppy to take home.

We couldn't wait for the day that Megan could join us at home and become part of the family. But then came those first few nights. She cried often, missing the remainder of the litter and her mother. She adjusted quickly, of course, but her rambunctiousness was unbelievable. Megan was puppy through and through, and we never thought she'd outgrow the stage. She was a handful for my wife, and would run around the house with things she knew she shouldn't have, and then make a game of it while my wife chased her through each room. It took Megan — also known as Megs — two years to calm down.

Every upland bird hunter owes it to himself to own a fine side-by-side double barrel shotgun and a bird dog. Partners to share those blue-skied autumn days in the coverts.

The neighborhood children loved her and she loved being with them. The kids could walk by our lawn or stop in and play with her. They didn't know my wife or me, but they all knew Megan. She liked playing with the ball and Frisbee when she was young and full of energy. Now, she's content to lie on the front porch when the weather is nice, and just sleep the evening away.

Because she was born in late August, she was much too young to accompany me on pheasant hunts in her first year, but when I'd come home with game, I allowed her to smell the birds and began teaching her basic commands.

Between the close of that hunting season and the beginning of the next, Megan and I spent countless hours together in the woods and fields. She was learning about hunting without actually doing it. She learned that if she stayed within shotgun range of me she wouldn't get scolded. If she began to range out too far she'd get the command to come back. She learned very quickly what I expected, and by the time the season rolled around she was 14-months-old and ready to hunt.

Her first hunt, first flushed bird and first retrieve all happened within a half-mile of our home. The bird came to the ground after the shot but wasn't finished. It began jumping around the swamp bogs with Megan joining right in. I was shouting for her to get the bird while she seemed to be just enjoying herself. Eventually we did get the bird and I let her feel, smell and taste it. That was the start of her hunting career with me.

Due to her training to hunt close, her keen sense of the presence of birds, and the unbelievable number of times she's sent birds right back to me, she and I have become quite successful at pheasant hunting. Since her first year and through this past season, which was her eighth, we have not lost a single downed bird. I feel that is quite a tribute to Megan, because without her on the hunt I know

we would have lost some wounded birds.

On her retrieves she always goes to whomever took the bird and proudly presents it, just waiting for praise, a pat on the head or words of encouragement, along with the dog treats that she knows are in my hunting vest. She loves her treats before, during and after the hunt.

Another comical occurrence is her reaction to me, or any number of hunters joining me, in regard to our fluorescent orange. As soon as someone pulls on the vest or the orange hat, the crying, whimpering and light barking begins and continues until she is in the truck, knowing that she will be part of the group. When we arrive at our location, I simply open the cap, lower the tailgate and get clear, because she'll be coming out ready to hunt.

Many friends and a few family members have had the privilege to hunt with Megan, and I can't recall anyone who wasn't impressed by her skill and drive. There have been more comical moments while hunting with Megs, especially when my brother and his son are along. Neither of them would be considered top-notch wingshooters, but they enjoy the outdoors and spending time with Megan and me since we don't see one another other that often. There have been a few hunts where she and I have worked together to flush, re-flush and re-flush again the same birds while my brother and nephew worked to take a bird or two. Sometimes, after a few flushes, Megan would actually stop and look at them as if to say, "This isn't how it's supposed to work."

That's when a little ribbing has to take place to make the day complete.

No story I have to share about Megan would be complete without including my father. He and Megan have a special relationship. That relationship consists of my dad paying complete attention to Megs whenever he's at our home. She understands that whenever "Grandpa" is



here she will receive extra treats, including ice cubes, which are one of her favorites. He knows that when he leaves he will be covered with dog hair, but Dad has enjoyed her company more than any dog he has ever cared for, and we all feel the same.

On a few occasions when my family and I have gone away, we left Megs with my dad, and the two of them enjoy sitting on the front porch and sharing a bowl of fresh radishes from Dad's garden together. Yes, a dog that loves radishes. During any hunt that my father and Megs are involved in, she never ventures far from him.

On several different hunts we've had family members or co-workers bring their dog. Some of these dogs were young and had no more on their mind than to play with Megan, but even in her younger years, Megan was not distracted by other dogs while hunting.

If a bird is near, she won't stop at any obstacle between her and the bird. In her early years she would clear stonewalls, brush piles and downed trees like they weren't there. She crossed streams, swamps and whatever other obstacles might be in

her way, all to get closer to that scent that was filling her nose. Unfortunately, she has taken on multiflora rose bushes a few times that resulted in our hunts being cut short because of cuts on her nose, ears, or tongue that required attention. When this happens, I can tell she's disappointed, especially if it happens early in the day, but I have to care for her, and a trip to the vet's office always took care of the problem.



The only drawback Megs has at times is gunshots. When a shot is fired she will move as quickly as possibly to the sound. It doesn't matter who fired. It could be another hunting party on game lands or cooperative property, where running into other groups can be common. It gets embarrassing when my dog makes a retrieve for another hunter, but brings the bird back to me. It doesn't happen often, but then I must return the bird to the hunter, along with an apology for Megan's actions. Never were the other hunters upset, though; more often than not they find it quite amusing.

The Fourth of July is a real treat in my neighborhood, thanks to Megs. When the fireworks start, most dogs run for cover. Not Megs. We have to keep her confined inside the house until the action is over, but her reaction is still unbelievable. She barks, cries, jumps on the door and wants to come out and find the bird.

Beyond hunting, Megs enjoys camping trips with the family, days spent ice-fishing and swimming. It seems most Labs enjoy the water, and it isn't important to her what the water temperature is, she will go swimming. I have taken her on walks in January when the air temperature was hovering around zero, and she'll go swimming. The camping and fishing trips allow her more time with family and friends, and there's always the chance that she will find more food than she will during a routine day at home. Camping and fishing trips always finds us cooking on portable gas grills, and Megan is never far from the food. Even now, with her ninth birthday approaching, food remains a top priority.

In her younger years she was so comical to watch when ice-fishing. We usually sit as a group, so we can enjoy conversation while waiting for tip-up flags to fly. When someone gets a flag, it doesn't matter whom, she will run with that person to the tip-up. But the last few seasons, if I bring her along, she's satisfied to just lie around the base camp on the ice with the fishermen and wait for extra food.

Christmas morning is as special to Megan as it is to the rest of the family. She has her own stocking hanging with the others, and she always receives a few

gifts that we enjoy watching her open. I have videotaped a few Christmas mornings and she is always the hit of the film. She works diligently at opening her gifts, anxious to find the one that holds the treats. Once she finds it and gets a few treats, she's content.

I have dozens of photos of her on hunting trips, with game that she helped us get. My wife entered a photo of Megan in a pet photo contest and took first prize in the "Most Comical Class." The photo was of Megs sitting on the passenger side of the truck, looking out the window and using the armrest exactly as a human would do. We were on our way to hunt that particular morning, and while she was clean and dry I let her ride in the cab with me, unlike the ride home when she's normally wet and muddy.

Because Megan is such a remarkable hunter, I wanted to add another dog to the family, as a puppy, to learn all her good traits and habits. It took a few years of persuasion before my wife finally gave in. Two years ago Abigail joined our family as a 7-week-old. "Abby" is also a yellow Lab, although she is primarily white. When we brought her home she took to Megan instantly. Megs took on the work of being Abby's stepmother. Megan really didn't want much to do with her, especially with Abby's constant nagging, but now they are compatible. They are together constantly and hunt well together. Abby has become a very good hunter, learning from Megan to hunt close and to find birds when they come down. She is also very affectionate and loves to be near people, a mirror image of Megan.

I take both dogs for walks several days each week, but the walks, for the most part, aren't as long as they were a few years ago. Megan can't walk as far as she used to, but she still shows excitement when my wife whispers that they are going for a walk with me. Knowing Meg's limitations, I choose carefully where we will walk. She can't climb steep hills or clear the logs that lay on the forest floor any longer. I ensure that she won't have a need to exert any extra effort on our hikes. Following our walks she enjoys a long drink of water and then plenty of sleep.

Each year I hope that she will be able to hunt pheasants with Abby and me. I realize that our outings will be limited to a shorter period, but I continue to invite Megs along.

I remember after several days in the field, in her younger days, when we had an exceptional hunt with Megan showing her stuff, I would come home and tell my wife, "This dog is such a loyal friend and good hunter, she has a place to live all her life whether she has the physical ability to hunt or not. She has definitely earned her keep 10 times over."

And I will always feel that way about the best hunting buddy I'll ever have. Thanks, Megan. □

Cover Painting by Joe Mattock

A COMMON SIGHT this time of year, especially at dawn and dusk in suburban yards and gardens, the eastern cottontail (alias: rabbit, powderpuff or just bunny) is an adaptable mammal. As long as cottontails have fresh grasses, legumes, blackberry or raspberry canes, fruit and bark of saplings (young crabapple is a favorite) and nearby security cover, they'll thrive. Breeding season begins in the early spring, and with a gestation period of about 30 days, litter after litter follow at nearly monthly intervals throughout the summer. As with most highly prolific animals, though, rabbits experience a high mortality rate.



A Grouse With Attitude

By Stanley and Phyllis Inch

Last spring as I was riding my ATV through the woods on our farm in Snyder County, to check for weeds in some of the surrounding fields, I noticed a ruffed grouse running alongside not more than 20 feet away. I didn't think much about it, as I had read in *Game News* that grouse are often attracted to equipment, such as machinery and chain saws. Besides, the engine of my ATV at certain speeds sounds much like a drumming grouse, and I figured the bird was male and just out checking the competition.

As spring turned to summer, however, we began seeing the grouse more often, and he certainly was becoming bolder. In late June my wife and I were picking cherries in our small orchard behind the house when we heard him making strange noises directly under the tree. That apparently wasn't close enough for him, as he flew up and perched on a branch right beside my wife. Then, before she knew what had happened, it jumped from the branch onto her head. Luckily, she only spilled the cherries and didn't fall from the ladder, as she certainly didn't expect the bird to be so tame. "Maybe he's in love," I said laughing.

Later that summer, while I was up fixing some shingles, the grouse landed on the roof and walked around in front of me. He was

so brazen I had to shoo him out of the way just to pound in the nails. The remainder of the summer he became a frequent companion around our yard and in the forest that surrounds our house.

We keep a picnic table and bench swing under roof next to the house, and whenever people came by for a picnic the grouse was sure to visit. No matter how many people might be visiting, he walked around as if he owned the place. If we were swinging, he would jump up on the arm of the swing and try to keep his balance. Whenever we would go into the garage or shed, he usually followed. Any attempt to shoo the bird from inside was met by a flapping of wings. He even tried to follow us into the house. He was even pretty aggressive toward the riding lawn mower, flailing away at it more than once. The ATV has also been a target of his aggression, as he flew after it and pecked at the tires whenever he got the chance. In the fall, while I was blowing leaves from the driveway, the crazy bird seemed to enjoy the breeze. He wasn't bothered by the noise and liked to lean into the breeze.

As the first shots sounded from the game lands adjacent to our farm during small game season, the grouse stayed close to the house. My wife is convinced he knew it was safer. While I was pruning apple trees in the winter, the grouse kept me company. At one point he ran between my legs and looked up in the sky and gave an alarm call. Looking up I saw two red-tailed hawks flying over.

During archery season he followed me into my treestand and stayed close while making strange noises. I would push him off and try to keep him quiet, but he would jump backwards, flap his wings and hover close by, never losing altitude. He'd always come right back to the same spot and start making noises all over again. Although I enjoyed his company, he ruined several evenings of archery hunting for me.

He is a beautiful bird and this spring we have seen him drumming, his breast puffed out and tail spread wide. We hope he won't be too distracted by this fascination with the ATV and other yard equipment to find a mate. It will be interesting to see if he comes around as often when his love life becomes more intense. □





STANLEY INCH is accompanied by an unusual companion on his ATV (left). The Inch's frequent visitor puts on a fantastic display near their property's forest edge (below).

Bear Season

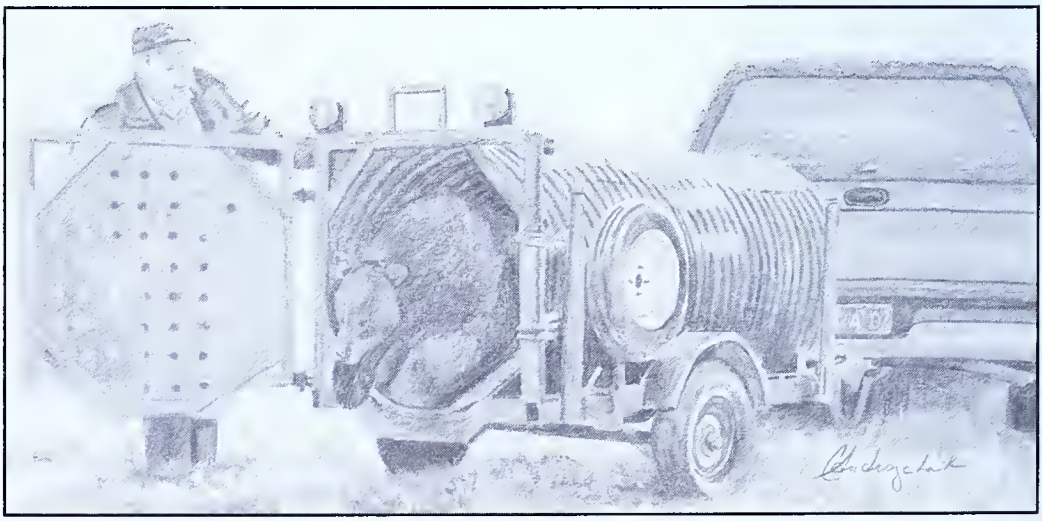
By Thomas M. Sabolcik
McKean County WCO

IF I WERE TO ASK hunters when bear season opens, most — if not all — would say the Monday before Thanksgiving. Their answer would be correct. If you were to ask the same question to WCOs in bear country, you might be surprised by the responses. It would vary from WCO to WCO, depending on district. My answer would be early March. And I think it's safe to say that for a growing number of WCOs, "Bear season" begins when bears come out of hibernation in the early spring.

I've lived and worked in eastern McKean County since graduating from the training school in 1996. The people here are friendly and very independent. Most have lived here all of their lives and are used to wildlife and problems associated with living in the "big woods." In the last 10 years or so, however, the number of bear sightings and nuisance calls have risen dramatically. The harvest data supports this. In 1975, 16 bears were harvested in McKean County. In 1985, 26; and by 1995 there were 102. In 2004 there were 114. A record 154 bears were taken in 2000. I haven't recorded the number of nuisance calls I've received, but I know they've risen every year since I've been here.

Further, for some people the mere sighting of a bear is a concern, while others tolerate bears as part of life here. The two most common calls involve birdfeeders and trash. I tell people that bears think with their stomachs, especially in the spring, when natural foods are not as abundant. Often people place their trash out the night before pickup only to find the next morning that it has been scattered by a bear. Placing the trash out in the morning of pickup normally solves that problem.

Birdfeeders by far are the most controversial cause of nuisance bear problems. Whether they know it or not, people who feed birds feed all wildlife. Birds are sloppy eaters and seed litters the ground beneath feeders, which attracts other wildlife. The problem is that when a bear visits a



birdfeeder, it has the tendency to destroy it. Birds have lived for millions of years without people feeding them, but if you must feed birds, simply place a handful of seed out on a platform or on the ground. Place enough for the birds to eat in one day, leaving nothing for bears to eat at night, and do not place suet out when bears are active. Taking in feeders at night reduces the chances that bears will find them.

The 2004 "bear season" for me began in January, when I received several calls about a bear in a tree about 100 yards from a roadway. When I arrived, I noticed the bear in the tree, apparently sleeping, snow piling up on its back. The tree was near an old orchard, and I could see that it had been coming down out of the tree and feeding on apples. I told the one caller that there was nothing unusual about a bear hibernating in a tree, and I explained that when the apples were gone the bear would be, too. I told him that the best thing he could do for the bear was to leave it alone.

Throughout the late winter and early spring of 2004 I received a lot of calls about bears getting into birdfeeders or garbage.

The bear stayed in that tree for several weeks, and I received a lot of calls about it. One woman was in tears when she called demanding that I capture it and hold it in a warm place until spring. I checked on the bear regularly, to ensure that no one was bothering it, and when the apples were gone the bear left.

Throughout the late winter and early spring of 2004 I received a lot of calls about bears getting into birdfeeders or garbage. In late April, Deputy Dale Thielges reported that several camps had been broken into by a bear. Due to rough road conditions, it was several weeks before I could check the camps. When I finally got there I could see that the camps (old travel trailers) had indeed been broken into. The bear had just reached under the doors and bent them up. I was told that nine trailers had been broken into. I inspected four, and every one had some sort of food or garbage in it. Several had large piles of trash stored inside, and most had not been used for several months, so it was apparent that the food or trash had been there a while. I located one camp nearby whose owners had been placing corn and other foodstuffs for bears and placed my culvert trap near the food. Within days I captured a 461-pound male and another weighing 220. Several people whose camps had been broken into demanded that the bears be killed. I informed them that no bears would be killed, and that the camp owners who stored food and trash were partly to blame.

Throughout May and early June a steady stream of bear incidents came to my attention. On June 8 a 140-pound male that had been raiding feeders was captured near Port Allegany. I told the people to take in the feeders and relocated the bear. Deputy Gordon Liezert then informed me of an area in Potter County where bears were causing problems. Potter County WCO Mark Fair was on vacation, so Gordon and I went to investigate. We borrowed a trap from WCO Len Groshek and set it on June 10. Over the next week nine bears — with several weighing more than 400 pounds — were trapped and relocated. And by the end of summer, WCO Fair had captured several more from the area.

Every time I receive a bear call I visit the person who made it. This way

I can assure the person that the bear is not a threat, and I can point out what he or she can do to minimize the chances of the bear returning. Oftentimes, I have to tell the person that they need to clean up and properly dispose of their garbage, that they're creating a problem not just for themselves, but for the entire neighborhood.



Late July found me preparing for two weeks of vacation. In nearly 20 years of service I had never taken two weeks off, and I really needed it; I put a new roof on my house. Even as I worked on the roof, though, people came over to tell me about nuisance bears. Deputy Liezert and I set traps in various places to try and help. Gordon placed the trap near the Superette in Duke Center and the owners reported that a bear had been caught during the evening. The next morning Gordon and I went to process it, only to find that someone had released it the night before. We could see human footprints on the top of the trap next to the door. Despite this, we reset the trap and several days later captured a 400-pound male. A crowd of about 40 people showed up, so while processing the bear we educated the crowd on how to live with bears. I logged 30 hours on nuisance bear calls during my vacation, and we captured five bears, and, surprisingly, I completed my roofing project.

In mid-August oats planted by local farmers ripened, and the bears hit them hard. I captured several bears in oat fields and two more in blueberry patches. Two more were caught near residences and another two were caught in local cornfields. With fewer farms still operating, I try to help these farmers as much as I can. Despite this, farmers sometimes suffer more damage by bears then they can tolerate. On September 12 I received a call from a local dairy farmer reporting that he had shot a large bear damaging his corn crop. Farmers have the right to kill wildlife damaging their crops, but they must report it. Deputy Dale Thielges and I went to the farm and met with the farmer.

We learned that the bear had not been killed outright, and we discovered a blood trail leading into the corn. Dale and I loaded our shotguns with 00 buckshot and followed the trail. Let me tell you, tracking a wounded bear through a corn field is pretty unnerving. I had to get on my hands and knees to look down the rows, and even then couldn't see very far. After about 30 minutes I heard several shots coming from Dale's direction, and then heard him say he got bear. The bear was circling him when he shot it at 15 feet. It weighed 461 pounds. When tracking the bear through the corn I noted large areas where bears had devastated the crop. The bear had tags in his ears, and I learned that he had been trapped previously in Potter County.

I thought that my hectic day was over, but around 6 p.m. I got a call from the same farmer telling me that he had just shot a bigger bear in the same field, this time the bear was dead. I arrived and was surprised to find the second bear weighed around 650 pounds, and it was less than 100 yards from where the first had been shot. Another bear weighing around 200 pounds was shot the following day in the same field. Later the same day a 130-pound bear was hit and killed on Route 155, about a mile from where the others had been shot. The farmer told me that he lost at least one month's feed for his dairy herd from bear damage. He also told me that he saw a female with three cubs in the field, but he did not wish to shoot them. For me, shortly after that week I visited my local chiropractor.

I continued to respond to bear calls right through bear season. We also handled five bears that had been killed by vehicles. In all, in my district more than 25 bears were captured and relocated, at least 12 were killed and 40 or more were legally harvested during bear season. Despite these numbers, deer hunters reported bear sightings all over my district, and one local hunter told me he saw eight different bears during deer season.

My bear trap had been in continual use from early March until November 15th. The trap was visited daily, including weekends and days off. I'm not alone in the effort to help the public with bear conflicts, as my deputies put in many hours. My neighboring officers help whenever called upon, and I certainly appreciate it. I enjoy working with bears and take every opportunity to educate the public on how to live with and enjoy them. Bear hunters should definitely consider McKean and Potter counties. There are some great opportunities here in the "big woods" and the people and businesses will welcome you with a great big bear hug. □

What To Do If You Meet A Bear

Bear attacks are rare compared to the number of close encounters. In most cases, a bear will detect you first and leave the area long before you'll ever see it. However, if you do confront a bear, here are some suggestions. Remember, however, that every situation is different with respect to the bear, the terrain, the people and their activity.

- **STAY CALM** — If you see a bear and it hasn't seen you, leave the area calmly.
- **GET BACK** — If you have a close encounter, back away slowly while facing a bear. If you're on a trail, step off on the downhill side and slowly leave the area.
- **DON'T CLIMB OR RUN** — Never climb a tree to escape female bears, be cause they chase their cubs up trees when they detect danger. Running may prompt a bear to give chase, and you can't outrun a bear.
- **SPEAK SOFTLY** — This may assure the bear that you mean it no harm.
- **PAY ATTENTION** — Bears will use all their senses to figure out what you are. If they recognize you as a person, some may stand upright or move closer to detect odors in the air currents. Don't consider this a sign of aggression. Once a bear identifies you, it will usually leave the area. How ever, if the bear stays, it may pop its jaws as a warning. That's a sign to leave. Some bears have been known to bluff charge to within a few feet. If this occurs, wave your arms and shout at the bear.
- **FIGHT BACK** — If a bear does attack, fight back. Bears have been driven away when people have fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars and even their bare hands.



PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by
Bob Sopchick

The Tenant

LOOKING DOWN at Chicago's skyscrapers awash in the coppery light of the setting sun, he had a vivid flashback of a Pennsylvania deer stand where the towering oaks would light up briefly just as the sun dipped into a slot in the hills. He recalled his first buck sneaking through those oaks and how that molten light seemed to emanate from within the deer, and how it continued to beam from within himself as he dragged it down the hill to his father's stand. It had been a long time since he thought of that woods, of that time, and he wondered if the oaks and the deer were still there; and for the first time in a long while he felt that light flicker within.

The jet climbed, and as always, he wondered at the pervasive geometry of civilization that stretched to every horizon. Tractor trailers, barely visible to the eye, moved like rectangular corpuscles along the complex arterial networks of byways that nourished the heartland. The plane passed over farmland, where an agrarian geometry commenced; immense fields dotted with woodlots, the once endless forest compressed and reduced to relic icons. With the plane gaining altitude, the panorama became pixelated, like a low resolution image; the very surface of the earth seemingly digitized.

As a leading computer graphics software designer, the last few years had been grueling, but he felt satisfaction at having met all the corporate and professional challenges that streamed his way. Lately, though, he felt that he was approaching a crossroads.

It might be that he was weary of the relentless business travel; the hotels with the bad air and tired buffets, the sameness of the urban landscape, the tedious lines at airports where everyone chatted incessantly on cell phones, forcing those nearby to endure the mundane conversations.

Shortly after the jet eased into the gate he heard the chorus of cell phone jingles as the phones flipped open. The man across the aisle, rigged out in a headset, wanted to know what the family dog was doing.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER he was at the doctor's office for a long overdue physical. Doc Phillips had been his father's physician and hunting partner.

"How's the grouse hunting been, Doc?"

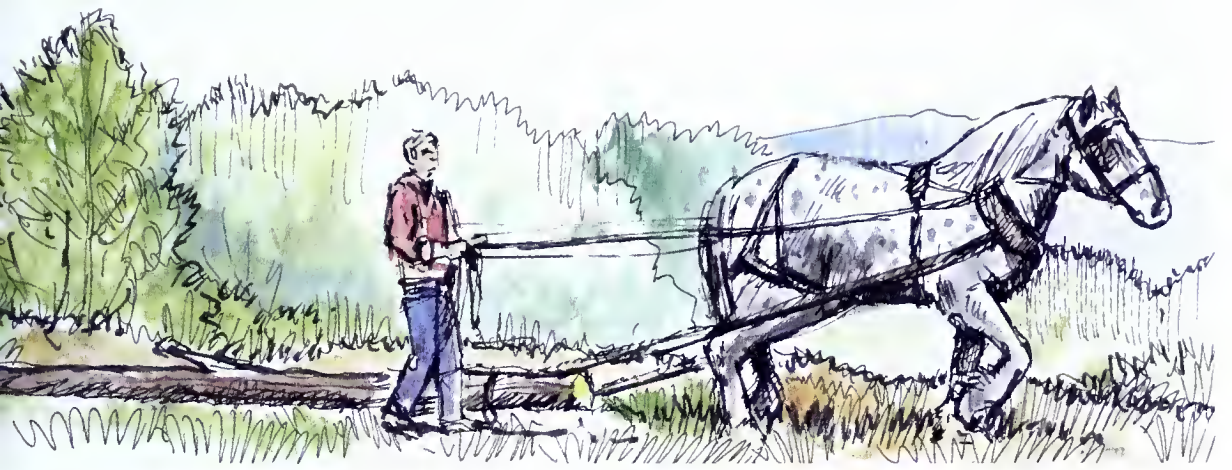
"Spotty. I'm 68 and still busting cover, although I think you might have a tough time keeping up with me, and you're only 43."

"Are you bragging about how fit you are, or how unfit I am?"

"A little of both. Everything checks out, but I feel that you're sliding a bit. The sedentary life doesn't sit well with anyone, especially a country boy like you. I'm going to suggest a regular fitness regimen and a change in diet. You've got to make time for yourself."

"I've been thinking of making some changes, possibly even a major move."

"You know, sometimes when we live too far outside ourselves, we can take on an



altogether different guise, both physically and mentally. When's the last time you picked up a shotgun and headed through the grape tangles? You used to be quite the hunter when your dad was living."

"A couple of days ago, on a return flight, I recalled hunting up at Bachman's place."

"I hunted woodcock there last fall. Old man Bachman's still living, sprite as ever, even though he's pushing 90. Now there's a poster boy on how to live a long and healthy life."

Doc scribbled a prescription. "Get this filled. And I expect to see a slimmer and trimmer Rob Carlisle Jr. on your next visit."

Leaving the office, Rob glanced at the prescription: *One bird hunt with me in October, Best, Doc Phillips.*

THE NEXT DAY, Rob pulled up in front of Bachman's trim white farmhouse. The farmer was sitting in a lawn chair next to a produce stand, grinding a peach seed with a Dremel tool. "Get yourself some sweet corn," said Bachman, handing the seed to Rob. "Guess at it. It's someone famous."

"Looks like a woodchuck," said Rob, handing it back. " Punxsutawney Phil?"

Bachman snorted. "Could be, now that you say. But if you hold it like so, you can see it's George Washington." Bachman initialed it and tossed it in a bucket on his left then scooped a fresh one from another bucket on his right. "Carving keeps my eyes sharp and hand steady. Every customer gets a free carving, just help yourself to one when you're done."

"Mr. Bachman, I'm Rob Carlisle. Years ago you used to rent that old converted sawmill up the hollow to my father and uncles."

"I remember those guys. A fine group of hunters, and I remember you, too," he said. Bachman eyed the peach seed. "Before I start I always have something in mind, but sometimes as I'm workin' on it, it gets to be somethin' else."

"That's kind of why I'm here," said Rob. "I'm thinking of starting a new chapter in my life, although I don't know what it might be yet. I need to think on it. I'm taking a couple months off and was looking for a place out in the country. How would you like to lease out the sawmill for a while?"

"Had some hunters up there a couple of years ago, but no one since. It's still got electric, and the springhouse is runnin' clear. It's pretty grown up all around though, and the road is poor. It's going to need a good cleaning." Bachman picked up an apple. "Let's go over to the barn, I want to show you something."

Standing in a stall, backlit by the sun was an enormous dapple gray draft horse that chortled softly at their approach. Bachman quartered the apple and gave a slice to the horse.



"This is Ted. I gave all my horses a three-letter name; Dan, Tim, Tom. They like things simple. His teammate Bob had to be put down, and he's not the same since his old buddy died. We always kept draft horses, ever since we built the sawmill."

Rob fed the other apple slices to the horse. He could see his own reflection in its soft dark eye.

"He likes you. Ol' Ted is gentle as they come. He's good company and will earn his keep on heavy work. We'll get some hay and feed up there."

"It's a deal," said Rob, understanding that Ted was part of the condition of the lease.

THE SAWMILL was on a small flat surrounded by a wild meadow that climbed gradually from there as a wooded hill. Bachman and his brothers had built the mill and worked it for a while, then converted the second floor into a living quarters.

Rob hitched Ted to an old cart and in two trips hauled all his supplies from Bachman's farm up through the long cool hollow. Along the way, Rob listened to thrush song and the drone of cicadas and studied tracks around the puddles. He spotted an oriole nest and watched a turkey hen and her poults run a long way up the road before cutting into the woods. He ate handfuls of raspberries as he led the great gray horse, the clopping of massive hoofs echoing off the dark walls of the hollow, like the steady measure of time from another age.

The lower level was full of antique tools, and Bachman had told him to use what he needed. Rob sharpened an old scythe and knocked down the weeds and cut a path to the springhouse. It took several days to clean up the place, and almost a week to repair and fill the deeply rutted lane that led up to the mill. He made repairs on the roof and, with a slab of chestnut he found in the mill, built a long bench for the porch.

He set to work on two trees that had blown down between the barn and the springhouse. Ted dragged the larger trunks over to the mill and Rob split and chopped kindling for days on end. Plagued by insects, he used several clay pots as smudge pots to ward them off, and the fragrant smoke of dried peppermint leaves and mosses lent a ceremonial air to his labors.

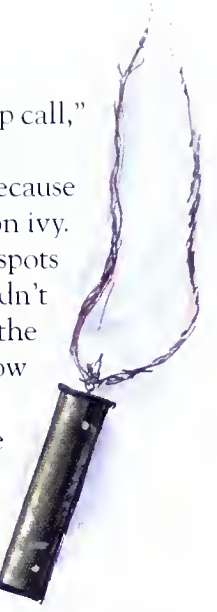
Come evenings, he would write in a journal or read and would sit on the porch until well past midnight, listening to owls and coyotes and katydid song. Stars hung so low they appeared to be on strands strung between the hills. It was deepest summer, and in the dark woods he sensed the maturation and ripening of nature's bounty. Fawns outgrew their spots, antlers hardened, bears foraged, turkey poults grew strong. Acorns, swollen and meaty, had taken on an oily sheen. The great bowl of the oak-filled hollow was like a cask, and aging so wonderfully within was the sweet wine of summer.

Oftentimes he would sleep on the porch, and one morning he opened his eyes to a dense, almost opaque fog, and he had the odd sensation that the mill itself was moving like an antique vessel adrift on an upland sea.

A dark shape emerged, a bull elk with high sweeping antlers, from which hung bloody flags of velvet. The bull plodded through the goldenrod until it was only yards away. It looked around, ears swiveling, nostrils flaring, then extended its head forward and in a great rushing plume of hot breath brought forth a screeching bugle that rose in intensity, like a pressure valve on an enormous boiler, descending into a series of coughs. Rob felt the hair raise on his arms. Ted whinnied from his stall. The bull turned and melted away

in the fog, bugling once more from higher on the hill. "Now that's a wake up call," he said.

A heat wave ensued in mid-September. He could not sleep, not only because of the oppressive humidity, but also from the torment of a bad dose of poison ivy. Covered with weeping archipelagos of red rash, he wondered if the itchiest spots were from the additional agony of mosquito bites. He tried to read, but couldn't concentrate, then went out on the porch and saw a light, like a lamp in the woods, that was the reflection of the full moon in water held in a hollow stump. It had rained much recently, and the streams were up.



Rob walked down the moonlit path to where the water from the springhouse ran into the creek. Wading out, he lay on a long gravel bar, just submerged, the cold waters running over him, soothing his raging skin, rinsing away the last vestiges of urban detritus from his pores. He opened his eyes, and from beneath the prismatic waters the moon had warped into the shape of a silver plane, or perhaps, he thought, a captive bird set to flying.

ROB BEGAN every day by shooting 25 arrows into the target bales with his old Bear recurve, and by archery season he and the bow were one. He had become lean and wiry, tanned acorn brown with a full beard. He ranged far into the hills on marathon hikes, occasionally spending the night. He drew maps and wrote detailed chronicles and catalogued certain trees with expert drawings. On a lip above the river he found a small spear point and shards of stippled pottery.

Late one afternoon a big doe fell to his bow as it came through the tall oaks, through that coppery light of his old deer stand, and when he dragged it down to where his father's stand was, he half expected to see him there. He found a .45-70 case wedged into a stump, fired from his father's converted Siamese Mauser. He punched out the primer and threaded a twist of grapevine through the hole and wore it around his neck. Ted was waiting patiently at the head of the hollow and Rob draped the deer over the great steed's back, and as they walked he told his best friend the details of the hunt.

Upon returning to the mill he was delighted to see Bachman sitting on the porch, and beside him, Doc Phillips.

"You didn't think I forgot about our bird hunt," said Doc.

"There's some grouse here, Doc, and woodcock too," said Rob, smiling.

They sat at the campfire, eating skewers of tenderloin and drinking coffee. Bachman handed Rob a peach seed carving. "Go on, guess at it. It's someone you know," he said.

Rob studied the portrait, turning it in the firelight. "You got me, Mr. Bachman."

"That's right!" Bachman said, slapping his thigh. "It is you. I could tell you had a good eye, you're the first one ever guessed right at what I carved."

"I was wondering if you would consider extending my lease through the winter," said Rob. "I've always wanted to spend a winter in the woods."

"Oh, we can work something out. My great-granddaughter's Lab had pups and I bet old Ted would like to have a pal up here this winter."

"Looks like you'll have plenty of company now," said Doc, checking the messages on his cell phone.

"I'm thinking of making some changes too," said Bachman, his eyes twinkling. Might give up on the peach seeds and take up chain saw carving. Folks say I have talent."

Doc Phillips laughed, dropping his phone.

Rob picked it up and pocketed it. "Sorry Doc," he said, "no cell phones up here."

FIELD NOTES

Happy Ending

PIKE — One dreary night while on patrol Deputy Steve Lacika brought along his GPS unit. We decided to see if we could locate a couple of the geocache sites that seem to be so popular nowadays. We were doing quite well until the batteries in our flashlights gave out. All I could think about was the fun we were going to have walking out of the woods with no light. Fortunately, Steve remembered he had his small penlight, and used the batteries from the GPS unit to get us out of the woods. Did I mention that we were never Boy Scouts?

— WCO BOB JOHNSON, MATAMORAS



Slugfest

I noticed a lot of rabbit fur in a 3-foot swath on my front lawn, and couldn't figure out what predator had taken a cottontail there. My grandson, Jordan, coming home in the wee hours of one morning in April, discovered the answer to the mystery. Two mature rabbits were "boxing" and kicking each other for all they were worth for several minutes, before separating and hopping off in different directions.

— RETIRED DEPUTY A.J. ZIROS, TOLEDO, OHIO

One of These Days

CHESTER — For the fourth year in a row a river otter was found dead in my district last winter, which indicates that the otter population here is doing well. It also indicates that the water quality is good. Now, if I could just see a live one I'd be happy.

— WCO KEITH W. MULLIN, OXFORD

Next Time Call Keith, Above

CHESTER — I was walking along Brandywine Creek when I noticed a ripple in the water made by something swimming under the surface. At first I thought it was a beaver or muskrat, but it was moving much faster and more erratic. A minute later a furry head popped up, saw me and vanished. It was an otter, right here in Chester County amongst the ongoing sprawl.

— WCO SCOTT FREDERICK, SADSBURYVILLE

Gone But Not Forgotten

WARREN — Deputy Paul Faith recently passed away, and I thought back to the time when he assisted me with a trapped bear. Paul had never processed a bear before, so after picking up the culvert trap with the bear and heading to the release site he asked a million questions. At the release site I opened the drug kit and we determined how much drug to give the bear. Paul missed the bear twice with the jab stick, but was so proud of himself when he finally hit the rump. When the bear went down, Paul pulled a tooth, tattooed the lip and groin and put tags in each ear. We gave the antidote and the bear came around and took off into the woods. I will miss you, Paul, your dedication, humor, wisdom and stories, but most of all your company.

— WCO DONALD R. DAUGHERTY JR., WARREN

Showpiece?

MERCER — The Mercer County Ducks Unlimited Chapter held its fundraiser on April 7 at the Rosemont Banquet Center in downtown Sharon. Next to the entrance was a decorative waterfall fountain, and this year a live hen mallard sat on her nest on top of the waterfall, watching the line of hunters checking in and getting their nametags. I wonder if she thanked them for the habitat?

— WCO JAMES J. DONATELLI, MERCER

So Far So Good

SNYDER — This county is one of six participating in the pilot HTE course. Our first knowledge and skills days were held in February, and both went off without a hitch. And, all the students passed.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE

Safe Bet

VENANGO — Recently, I received information from a lady who has given me good information at least three times in the past. When I got to her residence she said, "It's my favorite game warden." The information she gave me led to the arrest of an individual who had shot from his vehicle. I think she just might be my favorite "informant."

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Makes You Wonder

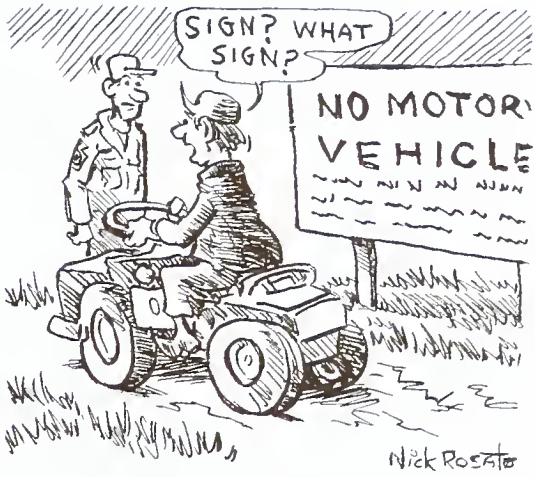
On the first day of spring gobbler season deputies Sam Hale, Chuck Worley and I discovered a turkey nest with 13 eggs. This nest was situated along some old oil pipe next to a small stream. It was also mere feet from an area that had been devastated by some thoughtless individuals who had decided to have some fun with their 4x4s and tear a large swath through an area containing a number of small vernal pools. This nest narrowly avoided destruction, but who knows how many other small animals residing in and around this severely damaged wet area were not so lucky.

— LMO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Frequent Flier

POTTER — For the third year in a row, in an apple tree in my yard, I've had a common merganser nest. It sure is nice to see her back and raising another brood.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT



Report It

BUTLER — "I didn't see any signs telling me that I couldn't ride on this property," the man claimed after I stopped him for riding his ATV on a cooperator's land without permission, despite driving around a gate with a "No Motorized Vehicles" poster on it. The number one complaint from landowners is ATV users trespassing on their properties. This practice results in more land being posted than any other factor.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

Missing

HUNTINGDON — On the spring gobbler season opener I spotted almost as many turkeys as hunters.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Springing Forth

MCKEAN — While out and about I've noticed trillium, Dutchman's-breeches and other wildflowers that I've never seen here before. It's a sign that our lower deer population is having a positive effect on our forest ecosystem. The deer I have been seeing are real healthy looking, too.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, CUSTER CITY

She's a Keeper

BLAIR — Deputy Bob Archey and I were processing our first bear of the season when I heard my wife, Shelley, explaining to the onlookers why we removed a tooth and how the bear is aged. Talk about great support, not only at home but also in the field.

— WCO STEPHEN T. HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE



Safety Conscious Bird

WESTMORELAND — Just prior to spring turkey season HTE instructor Carl Patty noticed something orange moving through his field. Taking a closer look he saw a turkey with an orange vest tangled around its body. Carl was unable to capture the turkey, but no one reported harvesting a turkey wearing an orange vest.

— WCO GARY R. TOWARD, HYDE PARK

Wrong Message

GREENE — One reason for having special youth hunts is to get youngsters interested in hunting and for them to learn the value of doing it right. During recent youth hunts, though, neighboring WCO Rod Burns or I have had to investigate a roadhunting incident. During this year's Youth Turkey Hunt Day, a father with his son were roadhunting, did not have their licenses, had no identification, and had no idea who owned the property they were on.

— WCO RANDY R. CRAGO, CARMICHAELS

Successful Day

BEDFORD — I was helping WCO Tom Fazi reintroduce an orphaned bear cub into the wild when we noticed an albino deer and a big male bear, and I found a shed antler that had five points. By the way, we were able to locate a female bear with three cubs that accepted the orphan.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, EVERETT

Worthwhile Program

NORTHAMPTON — Within a day of receiving information that yet another pair of ospreys was attempting a new nesting site, deputies Tom Harrington, Alex Gergar and I photographed the pair atop a section of large wooden utility poles centrally located in the county. Later that night, while reading "25 Years in the Works" in the May issue, I thought about how much impact the Working Together for Wildlife program has benefited wildlife over the past 25 years.

— WCO BRADLEY D. KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE



Planned It That Way

CENTRE — I was demonstrating the various calls of a wild turkey (clucks, yelps, purrs) for some kids at Mt. Camp Luther in Union County, when a gobbler sounded off from about a half mile away. After some time, and my continued calling, the tom came within 50 yards, gobbling all the way. I don't know who was more surprised, me or the kids.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, MADISONBURG

Helping Hand

Ken Highland from Tafton donated $300 for range maintenance supplies, such as 2x4s and 4x4s, to one of our Food & Cover Corps for the continued operation of the shooting range at SGL 183. Howard Dietz from Milford donated more than 5,000 lag bolts, bolts and nuts and some metal supports for target backing to be used for range maintenance at the SGL 183 and 300 ranges. These gentlemen are to be commended for their concern and generosity toward the continued operations of our public shooting ranges during the agency's difficult financial times.

— LMO John Shutkufski, Damascus

Concerned Citizen

Somerset — We received information about a poaching incident that resulted in charges being filed on two individuals for unlawful possession of game and resisting an officer. Fines totaled $2,250 and the loss of their hunting and trapping privileges for several years. This would not have been possible without an individual getting involved and making a call.

— WCO Brian E. Witherite, Meyersdale

Who Surprised Who?

Lackawanna — I was checking a forested area the evening before spring gobbler season when I found several backpacks and shooting equipment scattered throughout the woods near a dirt road. Thinking there may be someone close by and not sure what was going on I radioed for backup and hid nearby. Minutes later, three individuals dressed in full camo emerged from the thick cover. I stepped out and said, "State officer, stay right there." With surprised looks the group replied "Airborne U.S. Army." It seems I had ambushed a colonel, sergeant major and a platoon sergeant setting up a woodland terrain course for a local college ROTC class.

— WCO Mark S. Rutkowski, Taylor



Firsthand Experience

Armstrong — Deputy Matt Pfeil's grandson Doug (a veteran of many bear trap and transfers with his grandpa) immediately raised his hand when his teacher asked if anyone knew what bears eat. Doug spoke up and said, "They eat doughnuts and cake." The teacher corrected Doug, saying that they eat plants, meat and berries. Doug quickly corrected her, though, and said that his grandpa baits and catches many bears using cakes, cookies and doughnuts. I'm not sure how well this went over, but Matt went to the school and offered to bring in a bear and do a program. I won't miss that program, as it could be real interesting.

— WCO Barry J. Seth, Worthington

Senseless

We place out a lot of signs to let people know when they are entering a state game lands. These wooden signs, which cost about $50 to make, show the game lands number and acreage. Unfortunately, many of these are disappearing. I believe some decorate college dorm rooms and residential game rooms. Taking these signs is not only illegal, but for all the money we spend replacing them, there is that much less for us to spend for wildlife habitat. If you see any of these signs where they don't belong, please let us know so we can recover them.

— LMO Dale E. Hockenberry, East Butler

A Big Thank You

LYCOMING — While helping with a HTE class it was my turn to get lunch for the instructors, so I stopped at a sub shop and placed an order. While the sandwiches were being made I went across the street to fill my vehicle with gas. When I returned to pay for the subs the clerk said that a woman standing behind me when I had ordered heard the subs were for the volunteer instructors at a HTE class and paid for them. The woman, who wanted to remain anonymous, said her son recently went through the course, and she was impressed with the job the instructors do.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTOURSVILLE

Locked and Loaded

CUMBERLAND — I was talking to my old partner and neighboring WCO Ed Steffan, who recently accepted a promotion to the Harrisburg headquarters, when I overheard his secretary (anonymous) ask him to find out if I had any leftover bear bait. I never realized that day-old Tastycakes, fruit pies and doughnuts can bring out the animal in all of us. The next time I'm in Harrisburg, I'll have to remember to bring my tranquilizer gun, just in case.

— WCO RICK A. DEITERICH, CARLISLE

Get Involved

Individuals can support wildlife resources and our hunting heritage in many ways. Some buy a hunting license, no matter if they hunt or not, to support Game Commission programs that benefit wildlife. Others join sportsmen's clubs and conservation organizations, such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the Susquehanna Waterfowlers and many others, that are actively involved in raising funds for wildlife habitat work. Without the support of these groups, a lot of this habitat work would never get done.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK



Perfect Combination

MCKEAN — I responded to a call about a bear breaking into some camps, and I soon noticed that all the camps had one thing in common: coffee grounds scattered about. The solution seemed obvious. I baited my culvert trap with doughnuts and caught and relocated a 280-pound bear. I guess the times I've spent in doughnut shops just "drinking coffee" paid off.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Using Their Heads

BEDFORD — On the gobbler season opener here it was rainy and extremely foggy, with visibility limited to about 30 yards. To the credit of our hunters, nearly everyone I checked not only had their fluorescent orange hat required while moving, but also a fluorescent vest.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Wanted Good Stuff

POTTER — I had one of my deputies set up a culvert trap to catch a nuisance bear that had killed one of the landowner's domestic turkeys. When the deputy later checked the trap he found another of the landowner's turkeys in the trap, happily pecking away at the pile of donuts. I guess I'll have to be more specific about what I want caught the next time I ask my deputy to set a trap for me.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORK

Doe license applications

ENTERING THE THIRD year of the Wildlife Management Unit system, hunters must again apply for antlerless deer licenses by wildlife management unit, not a county, and mail their applications to the corresponding post office box, not the county treasurer. Under this system, all antlerless license applications will be sent to the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters via the individual post office boxes for each WMU. Be sure to use the right address label. The PGC will distribute applications to county treasurers based on the percentage of county land in the WMU.

Hunters receive an antlerless license application when they purchase a general hunting license. On this application the hunter will enter the WMU number and letter he or she wants to hunt in. A complete guide to WMUs, including individual boundary maps, is in the *2005-06 Digest*. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. No drawings will be held.

The completed application and a check or money order payable to "County Treasurer" (do not specify county name on the check) must be mailed First Class in the official yellow antlerless deer license envelope provided. Please remember to circle the number of applications enclosed — no more than three per envelope. The envelope will have an attachment containing mailing labels for each of the 22 WMUs. The applicant must attach the appropriate WMU label to the front of the envelope. Each WMU will have its own post office box in Harrisburg. Each day during the application period, envelopes will be collected from these boxes, inspected (unopened), counted, allocated and shipped to county treasurers.

Antlerless License Application Schedule

August 1, applications accepted from residents.

August 15, applications accepted from nonresidents.

August 22, first round of unsold antlerless licenses, applications accepted from residents and nonresidents.

September 12, second round of unsold antlerless licenses, applications accepted from residents and nonresidents.

Be Sure to use the yellow envelopes when applying.

County treasurers will open and review applications for completeness and proper payment. If an application is not complete and/or proper remittance is not enclosed, it will be rejected and returned to the applicant. If the applicant failed to provide return postage, the envelope will be placed in a dead letter file. Hunters will have the opportunity to retrieve their dead letters by contacting the PGC at 717-787-2084 from 7:45 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. This line will be activated August 29. (This year there will not be a toll-free number for this service.)

If the license allocation in a WMU is sold out, the application will be re-

turned to the hunter. Using a new envelope, the hunter may apply to another WMU with licenses available.

The application schedule for antlerless licenses will remain essentially the same as it has been in recent years. Applications will be accepted from state residents beginning Monday, August 1. Nonresident applications will be accepted beginning Monday, August 15. On Monday, August 22, the first round of unsold antlerless applications, from residents and nonresidents, will be accepted for WMUs with licenses remaining. In this round, an individual may submit only one unsold application. On Monday, Sept. 12, the second round of unsold applications will be accepted in WMUs with remaining licenses. Once again, an individual may apply for only one "second" unsold license. Overall, an individual may apply for and receive no more than two unsold licenses.

In WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D there is no limit to the number of unsold antlerless license applications an individual may make or receive. This may be done by mail only, starting Monday, Aug. 22. In those three units, over-the-counter sales begin Monday, Sept. 19. Statewide, over-the-counter sales begin Monday, Nov 7. Directions for obtaining landowner, disabled veteran and armed forces antlerless licenses are in the *2005-06 Digest*.

Elk applications being accepted

ELK LICENSE applications are now being accepted from those interested not only in one of the 40 elk hunting licenses (10 antlered and 30 antlerless) allocated for this fall's season, but also for the 10 licenses (two either-sex and eight antlerless) allocated for the September 2006 hunt.

The public drawing will be Saturday, Sept. 24; time and place to be announced later. The elk seasons are Nov. 7-12, 2005, and Sept. 18-23, 2006.

Hunters may complete and submit applications online, through the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us). Just click on "2005 Elk Hunt Information" on the homepage and then "Apply Online." A $10 nonrefundable fee must be submitted with the application, VISA, MasterCard, Discover and American Express accepted, and must be submitted by Sept. 19.

For those who prefer to complete a mail-in form, a printable application is available on the Game Commission's website and in the *2004-2005 Hunting and Trapping Digest*.

Mail-in applications must be accompanied by a check or money order (do not send cash) for $10 made payable to "Pennsylvania Game Commission," and must be received in the Game Commission's post office box by Aug. 29. Mail-in applications must be mailed to: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Elk License Application, P.O. Box 61890, Harrisburg, PA 17106-1890. No Game Commission office will accept hand-delivered application, and only one application is permitted per person.

Those applying for an elk license will have the option to indicate whether they would like to be considered for the November 2005 hunt, the September 2006 hunt or both. Applicants also may indicate their choice for either an antlered or antlerless elk license, or they may select "either." For those who select "antlered only," if they are drawn after the antlered li-

censes are allocated, they will not receive an elk license. For those who do receive an antlered elk license, they will not be permitted to re-apply for future elk hunting opportunities for five years.

For the September 2006 hunt, two "either sex" elk licenses will be awarded and eight antlerless elk licenses will be awarded. Those who receive the "either sex" licenses will be able to take either an antlered or antlerless elk. There is a limit of one elk per license year. So, if a hunter drawn for the September 2006 hunt is successful in harvesting an elk, that hunter will not be eligible to receive an elk license for the November 2006 hunt.

Beginning in 2003, unsuccessful applicants began to earn preference points, one point for each year they submit an application but are not drawn. When a hunter with preference points applies for an elk license, his or her name is added to the drawing an extra time for each preference point he or she has accumulated. For example, a person who applied in 2003 and 2004, and who also applies this year, will be entered three times. Preference points are carried forward until an applicant is drawn; there is no requirement that applications be made in consecutive years in order to retain preference points. However, individuals must apply in order to have their preference points entered for a given license year.

Bobcat — Mail-in applications accepted July 1 through August 15, 2005.
On-line applications accepted through September 6, 2005.
See the 2005-06 *Hunting & Trapping Digest* for details.

Individuals, especially those who live in the elk range or are familiar with the elk herd, may apply for a permit to serve as a guide for those who receive an elk license. Guides may provide assistance in locating, calling and tracking elk, but may not drive for or harvest elk. Guide permits will be $10 for residents and $25 for nonresidents. Permit applications may be obtained from the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters. Completed applications must be received in the Harrisburg headquarters no later than Sept. 19.

For additional information, check the 2005-06 *Hunting and Trapping Digest* and the agency's website.

Contacting the Region Offices

Reminder

Due to cost-cutting measures, effective July 1, 2005, toll-free numbers for Game Commission region offices will be disconnected.

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Former Commissioner Vogue dies

FORMER Pennsylvania Game Commissioner Edward L. Vogue, 68, of Dupont died this past April. Vogue was appointed to the Pennsylvania Game Commission in December 1987 and served until 1995. In 1991 and 1995, he was Commission president.

Born in Pittston in 1936, Vogue was a graduate of Dupont High School and the University of Scranton, where he earned a bachelor of science degree and master's degree, and worked as a principal for Pocono Mountain School District.

Longtime *Game News* writer dies

LAWRENCE J. KOPP of Klingerstown, in western Schuylkill County, passed away this past May, at the age of 83. Through the 1950s and into the mid-'60s, Kopp was a regular *Game News* contributor. Most of his nearly 100 articles appeared under the "Traps to Wraps" banner, and were about trapping and furbearers.

Among many other accomplishments, Kopp was also a silk moth farmer for 40 years, and he annually raised 20,000 to 30,000 cocoons and sold them to many universities and biological supply houses for research purposes.

Middle Creek programs/art show

July 20 "Tracking Turtles: On the Trail of the Bog Turtle," George Gress, Manager, Acopian Preserve, The Nature Conservancy. You might not think that it would be all that difficult to keep track of a turtle. When you consider their habitats though, it can be difficult or impossible to keep track of a small animal in heavy vegetation and muck. The bog turtle is an endangered species that has very specific habitat needs. The Nature Conservancy is conducting research using radio telemetry equipment to find out more about this elusive animal. Learn more about Pennsylvania's smallest turtle and the conservation efforts underway to protect it.

August 5, 6, & 7 Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show

This, the 20th Annual Wildlife Art Show, will showcase 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. Take advantage of this opportunity to see and purchase some beautiful wildlife art, and meet the artists who create it. Show days and times are: Friday, Aug. 5, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Satudray, Aug. 6, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, Aug. 7, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Volunteers needed for Breeding Bird Atlas

AS PART of the second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, the Game Commission and Carnegie Museum of Natural History are looking for people to help census nesting wild birds. This second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas is the most extensive survey of the state's nesting birds ever undertaken. Started a year ago, the survey will continue for the next four years, and is designed to uncover changes in nesting bird populations that have occurred here since the first atlas was completed in 1989.

When finished, the second Atlas will show changes in the occurrence and distribution of the state's nearly 200 species of nesting birds, and promises to provide much additional information about the state's breeding birds. The use of technologies such as global positioning satellites and geographic information systems — unavailable when data for the first Atlas was collected —are expected to improve the survey. But the quantity and quality of data collected will ultimately depend upon the number of volunteers who participate.



Individuals interested in volunteering are asked to register on the Atlas website at www.pabirdatlas.org, or call Atlas project coordinators at 724-593-6022. On the website, those interested will be able to find out which region they're in and which region coordinator to contact. They will also be able to print instructions, block maps, field cards and other forms needed for doing the Atlas; get birdwatching and bird identification tips; view complete results from the first Atlas; follow the progress of the second Atlas; and enter their observations of breeding birds.

For a first-person account of what participating in the Breeding Bird Atlas project is all about, check out Marcia Bonta's "Chasing Breeding Birds" in the June 2005 *Game News*.

SGL 223 wetlands dedicated

A 13-ACRE wetlands on SGL 223 was dedicated this past May, along with an observation platform at the wetland made possible thanks to the Izaak Walton League.

This wetlands project actually grew from a training class that was held by the USFWS for close to 30 PGC employees. Part of the class was a field exercise to pick a site, complete the soil tests, survey, and submit required permits. USFWS instructors liked the site so well that they pretty much approved the project that day, and thanks to Pheas-



Vince Palone

THANKS to a cooperative effort involving Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the Izaak Walton League and others, a 13-acre wetland and observation deck was created on SGL 223, in southeastern Greene County.

ant Forever, funding for the project was obtained through Ducks Unlimited and USFWS.

Upon completion, so many cars traveling past the wetlands would stop on the road to view and listen to the wildlife that Land Manager Doug Dunkerley and Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Dave Griffin discussed the possibility of constructing a viewing platform along the road. Budget constraints, however, seemed to make that unlikely, but Dave was persistent.



Vince Palone

DAVE GRIFFIN, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, cuts a ribbon to the observation platform built along a new wetlands on SGL 223. Looking on are Fayette County WCO Steve Leiendecker, Commissioner Roxane Palone, Greene County WCO Rod Burns, Executive Director Vern Ross, WCO Rich Joyce and Land Management Group Supervisor Doug Dunkerley.

He contacted the Izaak Walton League, and to make a long story short, by the time Dave was done he had the Izaak Walton League, Greene County Prison, PennDOT, and Greene Co. Votech chipping in labor, materials and money to complete the entire project.

The viewing platform is like the wetlands, build it and they will come: People are stopping everyday to view the ever-changing wildlife.

New safety record set in '04

THERE WERE 56 hunting related shooting incidents, including four fatalities, last year, making 2004 the safest in the 90 years records have been kept. The incident rate of 5.56 per 100,000 participants was the lowest on record. In 2003, the year the previous records were set, there were 57 incidents, including four fatalities, and the incident rate was 5.63 per 100,000.

"One of the issues that most concerns me," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director, "is that 25 percent of the incidents — 14 out of 56 — were self-inflicted and included one fatality. This tells me that hunters must work to remember and practice safe firearm handling practices."

In 2004, the incident statistics by species hunted were: deer, 23 (including four fatalities); turkey, 14; small game, 13; waterfowl, 4; and other, 2.

People shot in the line-of-fire comprised 18 of the incidents, including one fatality. The second most common cause for shooting incidents was in-mistake-for-game, which accounted for 16 incidents, including one fatality. Unintentional discharge accounted for 8 incidents, including one fatality, followed by: sporting arm in a dangerous position, 6, including one fatality; slipped and/or fell, 4; ricochet, 3; and a defective sporting arm, 1.

Information about hunting related shooting incidents back to 1991 can be found at www.pgc.state.pa.us (select "Education," then "Hunting-Related Shooting Incident Statistics").

In Memoriam

Barry Ray
Land Mgmt. Officer Manager
1941-2005
31 Years Service

Ernest Taylor
Wildlife Conservation Officer
Northwest
1937-2004
28 Years Service

Carl Jarrett
Wildlife Conservation Officer II
Southcentral
1922-2004
32 Years Service

Hans Goedeke
Wildlife Conservation Officer II
Southeast
1938-2004
32 Years Service

Budd Souter
Semi-skilled Laborer
Loyalsock GF
1943-2004
26 Years Service

George Church
Wildlife Conservation Officer
Supervisor
Southwest
1922-2004
32 Years Service

James Burns
Wildlife Conservation Officer
Southwest
1925-2004
29 Years Service

Kenneth Bollinger
Game Lands Maint. Worker
Southwest
1928-2005
28 Years Service

Ted Vesloski
Law Enforcement Supervisor
Northeast
1927-2004
34 Years Service

Albert Kriefski
Wildlife Conservation Officer
Northeast
1920-2005
33 Years Service

John Hardentstine
Game Lands Maint. Worker
Northeast
1943-2004
24 Years Service

Donald Kramer
Game Lands Maint. Worker 2
Northcentral
1945-2005
23 Years Service

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation performed 60 projects with Hunting Heritage Super Fund money in 2004 and spent more than $190,000 on habitat enhancement projects. Nearly 2,500 acres of state game lands, state parks and forests and private land open to public hunting were affected by the projects in 48 counties. Habitat projects included creating turkey brood habitat and feeding areas; planting fruit and nut producing trees and shrubs; planting conifers for winter habitat; renting equipment and purchasing lime, seed and fertilizer for maintaining existing wildlife openings; and fencing orchards and trees from deer. The Keystone State has 72 chapters representing 22,000 volunteers, which makes it the seventh largest membership base in the NWTF.

Missouri

Women now make up 11 percent of the state's deer hunters — up from 8 percent in 1996.

Ohio

Evidence of bobcats living in eastern and southeastern counties continues with the confirmation of 14 sightings by state wildlife officials during 2004.

Kansas

In 2004, 13 hunting-related incidents, including two fatalities, were reported — five fewer than in 2003. The fatalities were a hunter who drowned and a passenger who was killed when a vehicle chasing a coyote rolled over. Of the other 11 injuries, four involved rifles, five involved shotguns, one was the result of a hunter falling from a treestand and one was a knife cut sustained while field-dressing a deer.

Maryland

Legislators responded to their sportsmen constituents and put the brakes on a bill that would have removed the state's wildlife agency's authority to regulate bear populations. House Bill 371 would have stripped the Department of Natural Resources of its authority to manage its bear population by prohibiting the agency from establishing a bear hunt, a management tool needed to keep bear populations healthy and residents safe. Earlier this year, Maryland sportsmen helped defeat an anti-trapping bill.

Colorado

The Division of Wildlife reports that they have completed testing on 12,901 hunter submitted deer, elk and moose as of early February for Chronic Wasting Disease. Samples included 5,427 mule deer, 203 white-tailed deer, 7,170 elk and 102 moose. CWD was detected in 154 of the animals: 127 mule deer, 3 white-tailed deer and 24 elk. To date, CWD has not been detected in free-ranging moose.

If you're out and about during the spring gobbler season or the early fall archery season or dove season, you'll have to put up with . . .

Gnats, Skeeters and Other Annoyances

I HATE to nit-pick, but the gnats make me do it. I stepped onto the back porch for a minute this morning to talk with one of the turkey hunters staying at my place, and I felt it crawling at my temple. I reached up and pinched it dead. Then I looked down at my T-shirt. More black spots, and they were moving. I picked the "nits" off my top and fled back behind the screen door.

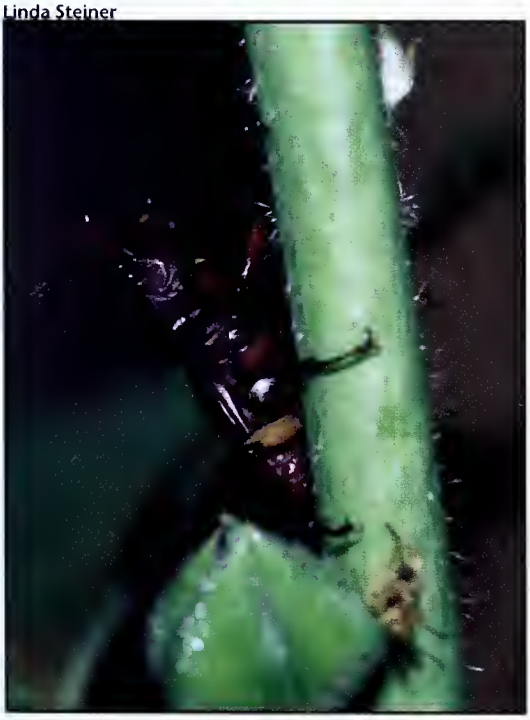
The turkey hunter joined me. The morning had been chilly, but by late morning the fickle spring temperature had soared. And the "bugs" had roared out of their overnight hiding spots.

"The gnats were just terrible out there," he told me. "I had a gobbler coming in and I couldn't swat. They ate me up. Didn't get the turkey, either."

The gnats he was talking about are the insects that are the reason I don't visit the mountains of New England or go to the upper Midwest or Canada between spring thaw and midsummer. The small biters are blackflies, pesky insects that are a boon and a bane. Their presence means that nearby streams are clean. Blackfly larvae live in the oxygen-rich riffles of waterways, but they are also biters and blood-letters.

Fortunately, the blackflies run their course, or finish up their life stage when they need blood, and in a couple of months they are gone, or at least they're not as fe-

Linda Steiner



WHAT BIG TEETH you have! This stag beetle displays large pincers. Although it looks threatening, it's not an annoyance to those who go outdoors like blackflies, mosquitoes, deer flies and ticks are.



A DEW-HUNG WEB, spun by an orb-weaver spider, catches the morning sunlight.

Bob Steiner

rocious toward us. Many streams in the state are now sprayed with an organic agent that targets blackflies, but there is hardly money or manpower to do them all. Blackflies just come with the package of Pennsylvania's climate and geographic position.

One place in the Minister Creek valley in Forest County will forever be "Bug Mountain" to me. Some years ago, when a now regrown timber cut was new, several of us walked up the access road on an early summer evening. The tree sprouts and blackberry bushes in the cut were attracting hungry deer, and we wanted to watch them. We thought we might learn what bucks were frequenting the area and the current size of their velvet-coated antlers.

What I remember from that outing is only what I could see between my shirt collar pulled up over my nose and my hat pulled down almost to my eyes. We hadn't anticipated the "gnats," and there were clouds of them. At least I had long hair, and that helped to slow them from getting at my ears. But they crawled under my glasses, tried to get up my nose and wriggled beneath my cuffs.

I didn't want to complain; the guys I was with weren't. We didn't want to slap at the "bugs," because that would put off any approaching deer. None showed anyway. Finally we looked at each other and said, "Are you getting bit? Me, too. Let's get out of here!" And we ran back to the car.

Anyone who has had a bout with blackflies has plenty of "war stories." But these are not the only insects that can be spoilers to our hunts and other times outdoors. Take bees for instance.

I have not been the victim of a full-scale assault by bees, wasps or hornets, but I've been stung by enough rampant individuals to know I don't want a full dose. I came close on one of my first squirrel hunts. The day was very warm and my companion and I decided to sit together on the edge of a creek valley, to watch the big oaks on the other side for grays.

There may have been squirrels there, but I never found out. We had been watching for a while from a log along the muddy hillside when I became aware of a low buzzing. Just past my hunting buddy, yellow jackets were flying in and out of a small hole in the bank. With all the goings and comings, the nest looked like a jetport that was catching up on the schedule after a long back-up. I nudged my companion and whispered, "I think there's a hornets' nest next to you." I didn't want him to panic, but he did anyway.

"Geez," he said, jumping up and then jumping away. Thoughts of moving slowly so as not to scare game fled, and so did we.

I've heard others tell of accidentally walking into or uncovering yellow jacket nests and getting hit by the swarm. Another day at that same timbered area along Minister Creek, my friend climbed up on a big rock at the bottom of the cut, to get a better angle into the brush to look for deer. The boulder wasn't high enough, so he stepped up on a stump. The stump turned out to be a high-rise hornet's nest. His foot

went through the rotted wood and, as he told me, "I looked down and saw two yellow jackets on my pant leg and knew what I'd done. I jumped, and on the way down, I saw them pouring out of that stump." I had wondered why, when he hit the ground, he yelled, "Run!" and did just that.

Mosquitoes have probably spoiled more hunts than blackflies and hornets combined. Not only are they likely to be around in spring gobbler season, but they also attack the midsummer groundhog shooter, the September dove hunter and , especially, the October archer. Hunters don't so much look forward to the first frost so they can wear their new, insulated jackets, as they want to quit being speared by "skeeters." I hunted near the Conemaugh River in southwestern Pennsylvania one archery morning, until the mosquitoes drove me out. When I realized the coat of the hunter walking ahead of me shouldn't look gray and fuzzy, that the color and texture on his back were due to mosquitoes, and when the hunter behind me noticed the same thing on me, we got out of there . . . fast.

Hunters don't so much look forward to the first frost so they can wear their new insulated jackets, as they want to quit being speared by "skeeters."

Deer flies don't just harass their namesake animal, as warm-weather hunters know well. Deer keds don't just stay on that type of wildlife, either. Keds are the flat, leathery wingless form of a parasitic louse fly that hunters sometimes mistake for ticks when they field-dress their deer. If they don't notice keds then, they may see the insects after the carcass has cooled a bit. Keds will gather around the nose, eyes, at the anus, or in the creases between the limbs and the torso. They skitter away crablike when you try to grab them, and they're hard to squash.

Hunters may also get deer keds on themselves. I have never been bitten by keds, but they give me the willies. As I was skinning a deer on a warm day, I suddenly felt something moving above my ankles, under my jeans. I looked down and keds were crawling on my pants and, obviously, under them. I didn't feel right again until I had changed, showered and laundered my clothes. I've seen keds on squirrels, grouse and turkeys, and have had the winged louse flies flitting around me during mild hunting days, even into mid-November.

True ticks have always been a concern of hunters. The deer tick, or black-legged tick, is notorious for the affliction it may be carrying. Most hunters can now identify this spider relative (ticks have eight legs) and know to watch for the bullseye rash pattern of a lyme-disease-carrying tick bite and to get medical attention. Fortunately, the places I usually hunt do not have these, or the dog or wood tick, in abundance. I have seen just enough ticks on the deer that I kill and clean to be wary. Their potential for spreading potentially devastating illnesses makes their presence in the woods something to be reckoned with.

Not all of the insects or insect-like creatures I encounter afield are things I would rather not see. I enjoy seeing butterflies, attractively patterned moths, slim and graceful crane flies, damselflies, and the beetles that are beautiful metallic green or iridescent blue. I especially like orb-weaver spiders, which hang intricate webs that catch the dew and the morning sunlight. But their darker brethren have a truly well-earned notoriety among outdoorsmen. A French-Canadian guide gave that reputation a name when he told me the local word for the blackflies that plagued us was "La Peste." □

Birds not cooperating on your birdwatching excursion? Try this facsimile.

Dragonflying

"DRAGONFLYING is good for jaded birdwatchers. It presents new challenges," Cynthia Berger told me as we watched darting dragonflies at Whipple Dam State Park one sunny day in late July. Berger is the author of *Dragonflies*, an excellent new book designed for beginning dragonfly-watchers.

These "glittering aerial acrobats," Berger writes, are similar to birds in several ways. Like birds, dragonflies are strong fliers and have distinctive and often colorful bodies. Many defend territories, guard mates and are excellent aerial predators. The female and male of a species are frequently different in appearance, as different as male and female cardinals, rose-breasted grosbeaks or indigo buntings and, like those birds, the males are the flashier. Several dragonfly species migrate south in the fall and north in the spring. They also can be watched through binoculars, although close-focusing binoculars, designed for both butterfly- and dragonfly-watching, are better than birding binoculars, as I discovered when I used Berger's on our Whipple Dam outing. Finally, dragonfly-watchers, like butterfly-watchers and birders, can make original discoveries about species' distribution and behavior.

Dragonfly-watching has really taken off in this century, with the publication of two user-friendly dragonfly field guides: Sidney Dunkle's *Dragonflies Through Binoculars* (2000) and *Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies* by Nikula, Sones, and Donald and Lillian Stokes (2002).

Dunkle is an odonatist or odonatologist — someone who studies dragonflies — and earlier wrote two excellent guides to the dragonflies and damselflies of Florida. Back in 1978, Dunkle, along with Dennis R. Paulson and under the auspices of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas, came up with most of the common English names for North America's 425 kinds of dragonflies and damselflies. This made dragonfly-watching more accessible to nonscientists. Many names are site specific, such as swamp darner, Ozark clubtail and Pacific spiketail. Others refer to the dragonfly's color — roseate skimmer, azure darner, coppery emerald, cinnamon shadowdragon. Then there is my own personal favorite, the species that sent me to the books, the comet darner.

Living on a dry mountaintop, I wondered why I often noticed dragonflies coursing above the grasses of our First and Far fields. With the help of Dunkle's guide, I identified common green darners, twelve-spotted skimmers and common whitetails. All are large, showy species easy to see, even through my birdwatching binoculars.

But back on August 19, 2003, I was dazzled by a new species. As I walked across

First Field toward Big Tree Trail, dozens of huge, flashy dragonflies, which I later identified as comet darners (*Anax longipes*), zipped around me like miniature helicopters on speed.

"Heavenly Day," lepidopterist Alexander B. Klots said when he first saw a male comet darner, "isn't he a beautiful thing on the wing. With that emerald green of the thorax and blood red of the abdomen . . . " The male comet darner also has a greenish-yellow head and unusually long legs, hence the *longipes* species name, which means "long legs." Virginia Carpenter, author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Cape Cod*, published back in 1991, calls the comet darner "easily our most spectacular dragonfly . . . a fleet, powerful insect which flies with an easy, fluid grace . . . bird-like [in] size . . . and . . . rarely seen at rest."



For more than three weeks, male comet darners hawked insects over First Field, and never once did I see one land. Carpenter claims they are so swift that they are hard to catch. And they are fierce predators. She saw one with three dragonflies, half the size of its 3.2 inches, in its grasp. Dunkle wrote that the comet darner's preferred habitat is borrow pits or semipermanent, usually shallow, grassy ponds without fish. We don't have those close by, but apparently dragonflies do gather in swarms to feed on abundant prey miles from where you might expect to see them, which explains why I see so many above our fields. Members of a feeding swarm ignore each other and often consist only of males.

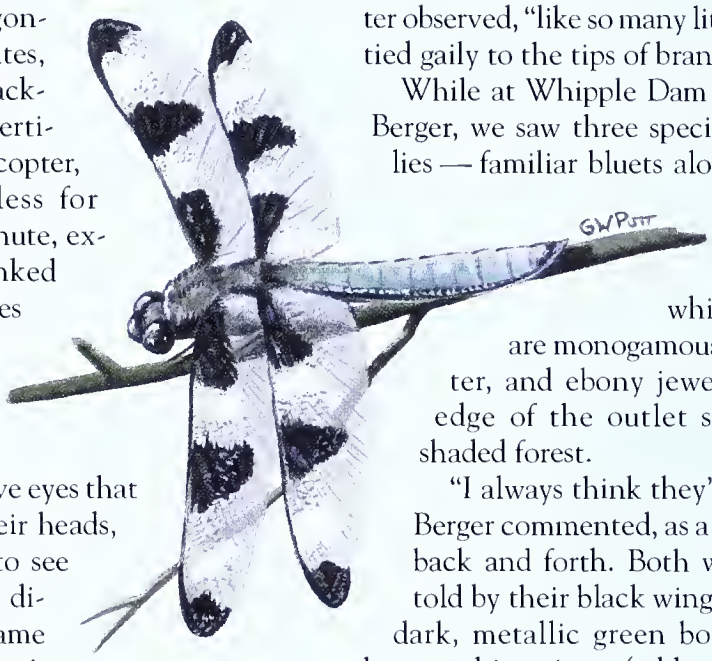
While the comet darner swarm appeared here only in 2003, the common green darners (*Anax junius*) are attracted to First Field every year in late summer. I sit on Alan's Bench and watch them zip about for hours. Only slightly smaller than comet darners, common green darners have bright green thoraxes and azure blue abdomens adorned with a vertical dark brown stripe. The most widely distributed darner of its genus, the common green can be found in all 50 states, as well as in Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and even Asia. They also breed in temporary, fishless ponds.

Some common green darners migrate; others remain in ponds as nymphs throughout the winter. Of the 300 dragonfly species in North American, only 16, from two families —the darners and skimmers — migrate. Usually they fly in air currents high above human sight. Many migrate singly, but sometimes huge swarms migrate. In 1992, more than a million common green darners were counted along Lake Michigan's shore at Chicago, Berger says. Like birds they follow land forms and seem to know their way instinctively.

Often, hawk watchers report seeing dragonflies, too. Late last August, Rudy Keller was counting hawks at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and he reported on the Pennsylvania butterfly and dragonfly listserv that "dragonflies were constantly moving by North Lookout or passing through binocular fields during my scans for raptors. Local redtails, passing kestrels, and even sharpies were stooping on, capturing and eating them as snacks on the wing all afternoon . . . " Keller was able

to identify black saddlebags and twelve-spotted skimmers, both of which migrate. Merlins also prey on migrating dragonflies. Other birds that relish dragonflies are common nighthawks, swifts, swallows, flycatchers and purple martins, all birds that catch their prey on the wing, using their mouths just like dragonflies do when "hawking" food.

Dragonflies can fly for hours nonstop, averaging 25 to 35 miles an hour when they are migrating, and they travel thousands of miles. "Dragonflies," Berger writes, "can take off backward, launch vertically like a helicopter, hover motionless for more than a minute, execute an unbanked turn, make a series of dazzling zigzag maneuvers, and stop on a dime."



They also have eyes that wrap around their heads, allowing them to see in almost every direction at the same time. Their color vision is better than ours — they can see four or five to our three primary colors, including ultraviolet light. Because of their superior eyesight, they use only their eyes to find prey. They eat flying insects, including other dragonflies, and need at least 10 to 15 percent of their body weight in food every day.

The insect order to which both dragonflies and damselflies belong, *Odonata*, means "toothed ones," which refers to their sharply serrated lower jaw that they use to grab their prey. While dragonflies are big and stocky with wings that spread out flat when they are perched, damselflies are little and dainty and fold their wings over their backs when perched. The ebony jewelwings or black-winged damselflies (*Calopteryx maculata*) sit on vegetation overhanging our streambed looking, as Virginia Carpenter observed, "like so many little black bows tied gaily to the tips of branches."

While at Whipple Dam with Cynthia Berger, we saw three species of damselflies — familiar bluets along the side of the lake, eastern forktails, which Berger says are monogamous, over the water, and ebony jewelwings at the edge of the outlet stream in the shaded forest.

"I always think they're fun to see," Berger commented, as a couple chased back and forth. Both were males, as told by their black wings and striking, dark, metallic green bodies. Females have a white stigma (a blood-filled blister at the tip of each wing) on each brownish wing and dull, bronze-colored bodies.

Male ebony jewelwings defend territory for as long as a week, from 10 in the morning until four in the afternoon, and mate with numerous females over that time period. After a fluttering courtship display, a male ebony jewelwing grabs a female at the

Cynthia Berger's *Dragonflies* is published by Stackpole Books, and not only covers the life history of dragonflies and damselflies, but also tells readers how they can attract them to their backyards. The book is beautifully illustrated in color and includes paintings and species accounts of the most common dragonflies and damselflies. Its comprehensive resource section will help anyone interested in becoming a dragonfly-watcher.

top edge of her thorax. Then they fly in tandem, the male leading, until they can form what is called a "copulation wheel." Dragonflies do this while flying; damselflies while on secluded perches.

To my delight, Berger and I spotted a pair mating on the leaves of a hickory sapling beside the stream. The "wheel," though, looked more like a Valentine heart. We also saw a male open his wings and then clap them shut. Berger says that both sexes may do "wing-clapping" to signal their location, to cool their bodies on a warm day, or to improve the intake of oxygen.

We didn't stay to watch the female lay her eggs on floating or submerged water plants, while the male guarded her and tried to court other females at the same time. I was content to have seen the three damselfly species and three dragonfly species — twelve-spotted skimmers, common whitetails and widow skimmers. But Berger was disappointed.

"Oh, it was so much better the last time I was here," she told me.

Spoken just like a true birdwatcher. □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

Can You Find Me?

Find the hidden songbirds, waterfowl or gamebirds by combining words in the sentences below.

1. Sally's gray cat enjoys bird watching. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
2. Duck under that pile of wood. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. Bob, in white camo, was invisible in the snow. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
4. "Hey, Jay," said his brother, "get the blue one." _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
5. Let's play pin the tail on the donkey. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
6. The catcher hit a fly ball in the outfield. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
7. The beagle provided a golden opportunity to harvest cottontails.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
8. The lantern flickered before the room went dark. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
9. He swallowed hard before opening the door of the abandoned barn.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
10. "You're my hero," Ned said. _ _ _ _ _
11. Is Rob interested in hunting? _ _ _ _ _
12. The dog growled at something in the barn. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
13. What's that birdsong you're humming? _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

answers on p. 63

By building on the basics, rather than going several years without getting a deer, you'll fill tags on a regular basis.

Steps To Success

I STARTED HUNTING deer with a bow and arrow as a teenager and success came slowly. I didn't have good equipment, and I wasn't proficient with what I had. I didn't understand deer behavior, either. To make matters worse, I didn't recognize a good deer hunting location when I saw it. Over the years all that changed and now, rather than going several years without getting a deer, success comes more frequently. The steps to success came slowly at first, because I had to learn just about everything the hard way.

Mistakes caused me to miss far too many deer, or to be in the wrong place for seeing them. When I had deer near me they often bolted because they either saw me draw the bow, or spotted me poorly camouflaged in the tree branches above. Today, I like to think I've learned from my mistakes and have corrected these problems to the point where I've come to expect success rather than hope for it. There is little doubt luck plays a part when hunting any game animal, but the steps I take to prepare for bow hunting season minimize my need for luck and maximize my odds for tagging a buck.



HAVING a good place to hunt is a must for successful bowhunting, and gaining access to private land requires some effort but it can be done.

The first step I take before the beginning of archery season is to be sure I have a good place to hunt. We have more than a million acres of State Game Lands in Pennsylvania, but at times some of these parcels can be quite crowded. SGL 219 in Bradford County is a good example. This property is nearly 6,000 acres and offers excellent deer hunting. The problem I find, though, is that it also offers excellent small game hunting, and it's common to have small game hunters walk past my deer stand, especially on weekends. For me, part of the allure of archery hunting is being alone in the woods, and I find it disconcerting to spend three hours in a tree only to have someone walk past just as the sun is setting.

As a result, I began looking at private property within reasonable driving distance from my home. To my great fortune, I received permission to hunt two good-sized farms in Susquehanna and Bradford counties. When I told some friends about receiving permission to hunt these proper-

ties they were surprised. They said they had been denied permission to hunt these same farms. I don't know why they were denied, but it could be the manner of how and when they had asked permission.

When asking permission to hunt I shave, wear clean cloths and always make it a point not to bother the landowner when he is likely to be busy. In addition, I seek permission well in advance of the season opener. Early September is a good time to ask, because most farmers have not begun to harvest field crops and, after evening chores are finished, usually have some time to speak to a potential hunter.

Because I am asking permission to hunt deer, I always have one of my treestands with me. I show the landowner the type of platform I use, to assure him my equipment will not damage any tree and, more importantly, that I will be safe while using it. I also ask if I may prune small tree branches to create shooting lanes from my stand. I have never had a landowner say no to that request. I also establish guidelines for hunting by asking where I'm allowed to hunt or if any part of the property is off-limits.

Rather than being denied access to some areas of the farm, I find farmers are eager to point out specific places where they see deer or where they are experiencing crop damage. This makes my scouting much easier, because I already know where the largest concentration of deer is likely to be.

Some landowners are reluctant to grant permission because, as one landowner told me, "How do I know you won't come back with a bunch of other hunters? I give permission to one hunter and the next thing I know I have a group hunting my property."

To put him at ease, I gave my word that I would never bring anyone else with me unless I specifically ask him first. If I do receive permission to hunt, I assume it is not for life and make it a point to ask permission every year, and I know the landowner appreciates that gesture. After the season, I always stop in when he is likely not to be busy and drop off a small thank you gift. The gift is not expected but it is always appreciated, and as a result, I have access to several hundred acres of prime deer habitat.

Once that step is accomplished, I spend my time scouting the area. Even if a farm has a lot of deer, they are not everywhere. In my opinion, pre-season scouting is the most important task a hunter can do to increase the odds of a successful season.

Some hunters advocate scouting for deer during the summer months, but even though it's fun seeing deer, I don't think the information gained is necessarily effective. Food sources change throughout the year, so deer seen in July or August may not be anywhere near the same spot by the time archery season opens. I begin scouting the first week in September, which gives me about four weeks to determine where the deer are feeding and where the food is.

Food Sources

The most important aspect of pre-season scouting is determining the food source that deer are using at any point in time. Early in the season, soft mast, such as apples or pears will attract deer. The only problem for the hunter is that the fruit may not still be on the tree once opening day arrives. For example, I find most wild pear trees drop their fruit before October 1. The fact that the fruit disappears almost as it hits the ground is testament to how highly prized wild pears are by deer. In the case of wild apple trees, I find not all apple trees are created equal — at least when it comes to how long the fruit remains on the tree.

Over the years, I've identified the trees in my area that drop their fruit early and those that hold their fruit until the season closes in November or even beyond. This type of information proves valuable as the season progresses and some trees become devoid of fruit. If there are apples on the tree I stay put, because I am confident I will see deer. If the fruit is gone, I move to an alternate location and set up over one of the other trees still holding fruit.



EARLY IN THE SEASON, soft mast, such as pears or apples will attract deer. Pears are highly prized, but they might be gone by the season opener.

Acorns always attract deer, but if it is a good year for acorns it could be a tough year for hunters. When mast is plentiful, deer don't move far to feed. Once at an abundant source of acorns, deer will remain for a considerable amount of time. If there are a great number of oaks in an area, a hunter may spend long hours on watch and still not see deer. When acorn production is down or in some cases, almost non-existent, a hunter may have an advantage. Find the one oak tree producing acorns and you'll have an excellent opportunity to see deer. Many oaks begin dropping their acorns in early to mid-September, so I look for concentrations of acorns and for sign that deer are feeding in the area.

If I find an abundance of acorns and the area contains fresh deer droppings, then it is worth setting up a stand. Keep in mind that deer, turkey and other animals love this type of mast, so it usually doesn't last long, perhaps only a few weeks. This is why when hunting in hardwoods, I always try to have alternate sites to hunt once the acorns are gone.

When hunting agricultural areas, I need to be aware of where deer are likely to be as October fades and November approaches. Field corn in our area of western Susquehanna County is often cut around mid-October. After the field is harvested, it is often a magnet for deer, especially if the corn has been mechanically picked rather than chopped. The picker leaves many ears and kernels scattered on the ground, attracting a large variety of game. Find the food and you'll find the deer. It's that simple.

Another step for becoming a more successful bowhunter is knowing the most advantageous places to hang a treestand. It doesn't make any sense to go through the effort of scouting an area and then hang a stand in the wrong location. Climbing stands are great if there's a suitable tree to climb exactly where you want to hunt, but that isn't always possible.

Before hanging a stand, I first determine where I want to hunt and then decide which tree offers the best opportunity for seeing deer and getting a shot. After I select the tree, I almost always climb it first and, securely connected to the tree with a safety belt, put the stand in place. Hang-on stands like the Summit Headhunter or Copperhead work great because they are safe, lightweight, comfortable and easy for a person to set up alone.

When selecting a stand location, keep in mind the spot will only be good if you can enter and exit the stand without spooking deer on your way in or out. One of my favorite hunting sites is located about 10 yards inside a field edge overlooking several wild apple trees. This is an excellent evening location, because I can park my truck and walk through the field to my stand. I almost never see deer in the field when I am going in for an evening hunt because the deer haven't left their bedding areas yet.

As good as this stand proved to be for evening hunts, I quickly found it was not a good morning stand, because I frequently spooked deer that were feeding in the field just before dawn. As a result, I have several sites I hunt depending on food availability and the time of day. Before placing a treestand I carefully evaluate the site as

to whether it is best suited as a morning or evening stand.

An often-overlooked factor when hanging a treestand is the location of the sun. I try to avoid hanging a stand where it is facing west if it is an evening stand or east if I intend to hunt from it in the morning. A hunter in a west-facing stand in the evening will have the sun in his eyes as it sets. Worse yet, he may be totally highlighted, especially when the leaves fall in late October. A stand that faces the sun in the morning can be just as bad.

When I hunt agricultural areas and find a fence encircling a field, I always walk the fence and try to determine where the deer are likely to enter the field. The first thing I look for is an obvious trail leading from heavy cover to the field. In the absence of a trail, I look for concentrations of deer droppings near the fence, because before entering an open area, deer often stop and watch the field for danger. Areas containing fresh deer droppings and obvious tracks may be good spots to place a treestand.

If a barbed wire fence encloses the field, I check the barbs for deer hair. Deer have favorite entry spots where they either duck under a fence or jump over it. Once the preferred entry points are determined they can pay dividends, especially if the field is a large one because it narrows down the places where deer are likely to enter the field to feed.

I put a lot of effort into scouting and site selection, so I have a great deal of confidence that the spot I ultimately select will pay off. I fully expect to see deer and that allows me to spend hours on watch, fully confident that I have done everything possible to ensure success.

All the effort of obtaining permission to hunt, scouting the area and physically carrying equipment, such as ladders and hanging stands means nothing if you are not proficient in using your archery tackle. I know some guys who never pick up their bows until mid-September. To my way of thinking, that is a big mistake, because shooting a bow skillfully requires some degree of physical ability.

Drawing a bow with a 70-pound draw weight may be fairly easy to do on a warm September evening, but it's far more difficult to accomplish when the temperature is 40 or 50 degrees colder and the hunter has been out for several hours. The muscles used to draw the bow must be accustomed to this, and this type of muscle toning only happens by shooting on a regular basis.

A successful season is dependent on making a shot count once the opportunity is presented, and oftentimes it's making the first shot count. Miss the shot and there may not be another opportunity.

I have a backyard target and shoot all summer. I find I shoot more frequently if I'm able to grab my bow and shoot whenever the urge strikes. There are many good, lightweight targets on the market, and they may seem expensive but my foam Block target is more than six years old and is still usable. By moving the arrow impact point around the target, I find it will last many years and thousands of shots.

If shooting in your backyard or neighborhood is not an option, consider joining an archery club or sportsmen's club with an archery range. Doing so can make you a better bowhunter, because these clubs have a variety of realistic 3-D targets for practice. The targets can be set at unknown distances and different angles, offering more realistic hunting situations. In addition, some clubs have elevated platforms that mimic shots taken from treestands.

Getting a deer with a bow and arrow is not an easy task, but it's not impossible either. Finding a place to hunt, good preparation, effective stand placement and being proficient with your equipment are steps every hunter can take to better prepare for the hunting season. A systematic method with deliberate preparation rather than a haphazard approach will definitely tip the odds of success in your favor. One out of four hunters fills his deer tag during archery season. Are you one? □

There's a difference between a reloader and a handloader. The handloader is a reloader who has taken the next step, someone out to put each and every shot into the same hole.

The Heart of a Handload

IT'S BEEN more than 30 years since I bought my first reloading press and a set of .357 Magnum dies, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Not knowing anyone who reloaded, all I had to go on was a manual and a sincere desire to learn. I have to admit that in being so anxious to reload my first box of cartridges, I skimmed through the manual and got down to only the basic points on using dies. I gave little thought to accuracy; the most I was hoping for was cartridges that would go off.

Bob Mitchell



At first I used whatever cases I could scrounge, whatever primers and bullets were available, and whatever powder would give me the most rounds for the money. I didn't worry about cleaning or trimming the cases, flash hole depth/uniformity, bullet seating depth or crimp pressure. Whatever worked through the cylinder of my revolver was used, and if it hit the target more times than missed, I was happy.

A little guidance from someone with experience would have gone a long way in not only helping me avoid some errors, but also actually learn something about accuracy. Luckily, most of my mistakes were minor, but I did cross into the "major" mistake category once. It happened when I loaded soft target wadcutters with a maximum powder charge that was listed for jacketed bullets, into cases given to me that had been fired and reloaded many times.

THERE is no such thing as a shortcut in reloading Study reloading manuals carefully, and keep your loads within the published limits.

To me it seemed logical that if a jacketed bullet could go at a listed velocity, then a softer, lead bullet of the same weight should do the same, but with less pressure. What I had neglected to read was the relationship between bullet hardness (in this case softness) and velocity, not to mention, case fatigue. It turned out that after shooting a little more than half a box of rounds, a couple of cases experienced case head separation, and what little accuracy I had dropped to nothing.

After opening the cylinder and hitting the ejection rod, I noticed the separated cases in a couple of the chambers as well as a lead build-up at the breech end of the barrel. When I looked down the barrel, it was so badly loaded from breech to muzzle that the rifling wasn't even noticeable. Even after using Hoppes No. 9, a bristle brush and plenty of elbow grease, I didn't even come close to getting most of the leading out, so I ended up sending a perfectly good Colt Python back to the factory. A few weeks later it came back with a new barrel and a note telling me to be more careful with my reloads in the future.

That experience, along with other minor mishaps in that first year, taught me a couple of things about reloading. First, there is no such thing as a shortcut. Second, do not read more into the reloading manuals than what is actually there.

These days, bullet and powder manufacturers publish manuals that are far more comprehensive and complete than when I started reloading. Many even have toll-free phone numbers you can call with questions or reloading tips. Believe me, the people who research and put out these manuals know their business, and they want to make sure that you understand everything you need to know to reload safely. If you can read a book, you can reload, but make sure you read thoroughly.

Going through the literature, you'll find there is a difference between reloading and handloading. A reloader is someone who enjoys shooting and is looking for an inexpensive way to do it. This describes most people who take up the hobby. The handloader is a reloader who has taken the next step, someone out to put each and every shot into the same hole. A handloader has learned to become particular about components, technique, tolerances and equipment. "Good enough is never good enough" is the creed of many handloaders. For the handloader there is always one more component to try, one more technique to sharpen, and one more piece of information to learn (either from more experimentation or a fellow handloader). Patience, focus and discipline become their most useful tools.

Benchrest shooters and varmint hunters are perfect examples of diehard handloaders. With their specialized precision rifles, scopes and equipment, combined with their attention to detail in handloading, they can consistently drill their one-hole groups.

Improve Accuracy

Don't think that accuracy is limited to these specialized shooters, though. An average hunter can take a stock firearm, and with careful attention to handloading details, can in most cases improve the accuracy of the firearm. Probably not in the realm of the quarter-inch benchrest groups achieved in some of the bull-barrel target rifles, but certainly close to a minute of angle or so if not better. If you don't, it's time to look at other factors, such as stock bedding, trigger pull and barrel quality — or shooting ability.

Over the years I've found there are two facts to keep in mind on your way to becoming a handloader and improving the accuracy of a hunting firearm. First, there is no one handloading factor that will dramatically improve accuracy. It's really the culmination of many different details executed with consistency that do the job. Some steps have a greater effect, some lesser, but they all have an effect. Second, the heart of a handload is the cartridge case.



Bob Mitchell

THE FIRST RULE to safe reloading is to never use cartridge cases that have been fired an unknown number of times, or those that have cracks, dents or stress/pressure rings.

It is the one component that we put the most effort into, because it goes through every step of the reloading process, not to mention what it goes through when fired. The bullet, primer and powder charge are used only once, but the case can be reused many times, depending on the powder charge. So, let's go over a few of those factors concerning the heart of the handload.

The first rule to safe reloading is to never use cartridge cases that have been fired an unknown number of times, or those that have cracks, dents or stress/pressure rings. It's important to understand that as a case gets repetitively fired, it loses elasticity and becomes weaker and more brittle. It's always a good idea to start out with brand new or once-fired cases, and then keep track of the number of times they've been fired and with what loads. Generally, the lighter the powder charge used, the more times a case can be fired. The heavier the powder charge, the fewer times it can be fired.

Another is to use cases from the manufacturer's same case lot number. Different lots have construction variances that can't be seen with the naked eye. Examples include thickness of the rim, web and the wall of the case, as well as case length, the depth of the primer pocket and its flash-hole size. These kinds of differences are not enough to prohibit their use in any other firearm chambered for that particular cartridge, and may even give you decent accuracy. The differences are enough, however, that they can have a different effect on the ignition of the primer, the way the powder burns, the way the case expands and the way the bullet is released.

So, when starting out with new or once-fired cases (of the same lot number), it's important to prepare them consistently. Here are some of the steps that many beginners forget or neglect, but that all handloaders follow to achieve accuracy.

- Clean all fired cases before sizing (usually accomplished by a case tumbler). This ensures that no dirt enters the sizing die and gets forced onto the case, which then gets passed into the chamber, causing the case to expand in a non-uniform manner. Cleaning also helps you see any deformities (cracks, splits or head separation rings) that might otherwise be hidden by dirt or powder residue. Also check to make sure nothing is inside the case. Once the cases have all been sized (full-length sized for lever, semiauto and pump actions; neck-sized if they were fired from the same bolt action or single-shot), check the case lengths to make sure they haven't stretched beyond maximum recommended lengths. If they have, trim all the cases to the same length, usually .005 to .010 short of the maximum recommend length found in manuals. RCBS now has its new x-die that once cases are trimmed, there's no need to trim again, because the die does not stretch the case when it's being extracted from the sizing die. From what I understand they work well, but it sure wouldn't hurt to check these cases from time to time, too.
- Clean the primer pocket of residue.

ONE of the advantages of "rolling your own" cartridges, besides the cost savings and the potential to squeeze out the utmost in accuracy, is the wider range of bullets available, particularly in the less popular calibers. This enables a handloader to assemble a load for a specific purpose if a factory load is unavailable.



Bob Mitchell

This ensures that the new primer seats evenly and produces the flame in the same manner every time. If the primer pocket is expanded to the point where it will no longer hold the primer, discard the case.

- Use a flash hole deburring tool on brass that hasn't been reloaded. This removes the burrs on the inside of the case left by the factory when they punched the priming hole through to the inside of the powder space. This ensures that the priming flame coming into the powder does not experience any obstruction and ignites the powder uniformly.
- Chamfer the outside and inside of the case mouths. This removes the burrs that can prevent an even concentric hold as well as release of the bullet. It also prevents scoring the surface of a bullet when seating it into the case, not to mention a smoother feed from the magazine into the chamber. One or two turns with a deburring tool inside and out will do the job.
- The amount of crimp that is applied to the case to hold the bullet also has an effect on accuracy. Except for the single-shot firearms, all magazine fed firearms will need to have their bullets crimped to some degree. Too little crimp won't hold the bullet in place during recoil, and too much will increase the pressure and negatively affect accuracy. Someone asked me once, "How much crimp pressure should I use?" My answer is to use only enough that will hold the bullet in place, and if you crumple the shoulder of the case, you have gone way too far. In thinking back, I doubt I've ever used more than a light crimp for any of my rifle cartridges, and the heaviest round I shoot is the .35 Whelen. But for heavy recoiling loads in large bore revolvers, a good medium roll crimp is necessary so the bullets don't walk forward out of the case during recoil and bind the cylinder.

There are other factors that can affect accuracy, such as separating cases by weight, neck turning, annealing, seating bullets to a certain depth inside the case (usually just shy of the lands), not to mention the variables concerning primers, powders and bullets. These preceding steps, however, have given me the most reward for the time and effort spent in my handloading, and will probably do the same for you.

Reloading ammunition is a great way to expand on your shooting enjoyment. And it is by no means difficult or mystifying. Presented here are just a few tips to help you get started. By all means, follow the directions and advice in a reputable manual, and don't hesitate to ask any knowledgeable handloader for help or advice. □

Fun Game answers:

1. gray catbird 2. wood duck 3. bobwhite 4. blue jay 5. pintail 6. flycatcher 7. golden eagle 8. flicker 9. barn swallow 10. heron 11. robin 12. barn owl 13. hummingbird.

Transgression

IN THE DIM HOLLOW a ghostly shape appears and reappears as I weave my way down through the oaks and corridors of grapevines towards it. I think it might be the white belly hair of a dead deer, or a dense growth of bracket fungus, and it is not until I am upon it that I see it is a profusion of pale feathers scattered on and around a stump; a veil of feathers finely beaded with dark pearls of blood, the plumage from a sizeable bird, fallen to a wild hunter.



To my surprise, these are the feathers of a bird of prey. I gather a bouquet of breast feathers marked with faint rusty chevrons, long dark-banded tailfeathers, lofty semi-plumes snagged on greenbriar. I can hear the sound of the chase when I wave several barred primaries near my ear. The familiar markings tell me it is a Cooper's hawk. Searching through the pile, I cannot find a strip of flesh, nor knot of viscera, not a taloned foot nor any bones, save the eyeless head with its steely-blue scimitar beak open yet in defiant scream. Who has slain this hunter, yanked the feathers from its wings, plucked its breast?

The hawk might have been found dead and scavenged on the spot. Almost one fourth of Cooper's hawks examined in a recent study had healed fractures, mainly of the wishbone, suffered in violent collisions with tree trunks and limbs in their intense pursuit of prey. Those found dead in the woods may have perished from impalement on a stick, from starvation after breaking a wing or, mercifully, from a broken neck. It is not easy business being a hawk, and sometimes the hunter becomes the hunted.

To me, it seems a transgression of sorts when one bird of prey kills another for sustenance. It may be that I recognize them as vigilant hunters charged with the difficult work of keeping wildlife populations in check, as if they were all allies united solely for that cause. The cold facts are, though, that Cooper's hawks prey on kestrels, while large owls will sometimes take smaller owls and hawks. There are no codes or statutes in the Laws of Survival, no rules of allegiance, only dictums spare and broad, beautifully ruthless, without subclauses or addendums: The Strong shall Survive; Hunt to Live; Seize every Opportunity.

Several yards from the stump a disruption in the leaves indicates a place of struggle. Among the feathers there, a soft feather from the wing of a great horned owl, silent when I wave it. The owl might have taken the hawk from its perch in the night, or possibly as the hawk mantled a songbird it had killed. Owls with young to feed will hunt during the day; a shadow of night passing through the light, like witnessing an eclipse should you see one hunting then.

Shadows slide up the oaks until only the topmost branches ignite with the last rays from the setting sun, then stand out as sharply etched lines against the evening sky. The hollow fills with cold air. Colors drain from the landscape, blending to a single violet-gray, and the white feathers glow brilliantly, whiter even than a deer's tail.

From within the pines, an inquiry, Hoo-who? Who? Hoo-who?

"Not me," I tell him, dropping the feathers.

"It was you. It was you."

Bob Sopchick

The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art presents...



Unfinished Business 2005 FINE ART PRINT

Unfinished Business was one of two paintings on Ned Smith's easel at the time of his death in 1985. This stunning oil painting of a Rocky Mountain elk herd, just days from completion, is a beautiful and dramatic image — and a fitting choice for the Ned Smith Center's 10th anniversary print. Orders accepted through Aug. 31, 2005. Framing Options: Two-Toned Walnut or Rustic Brown. Image Size: 24"x16"



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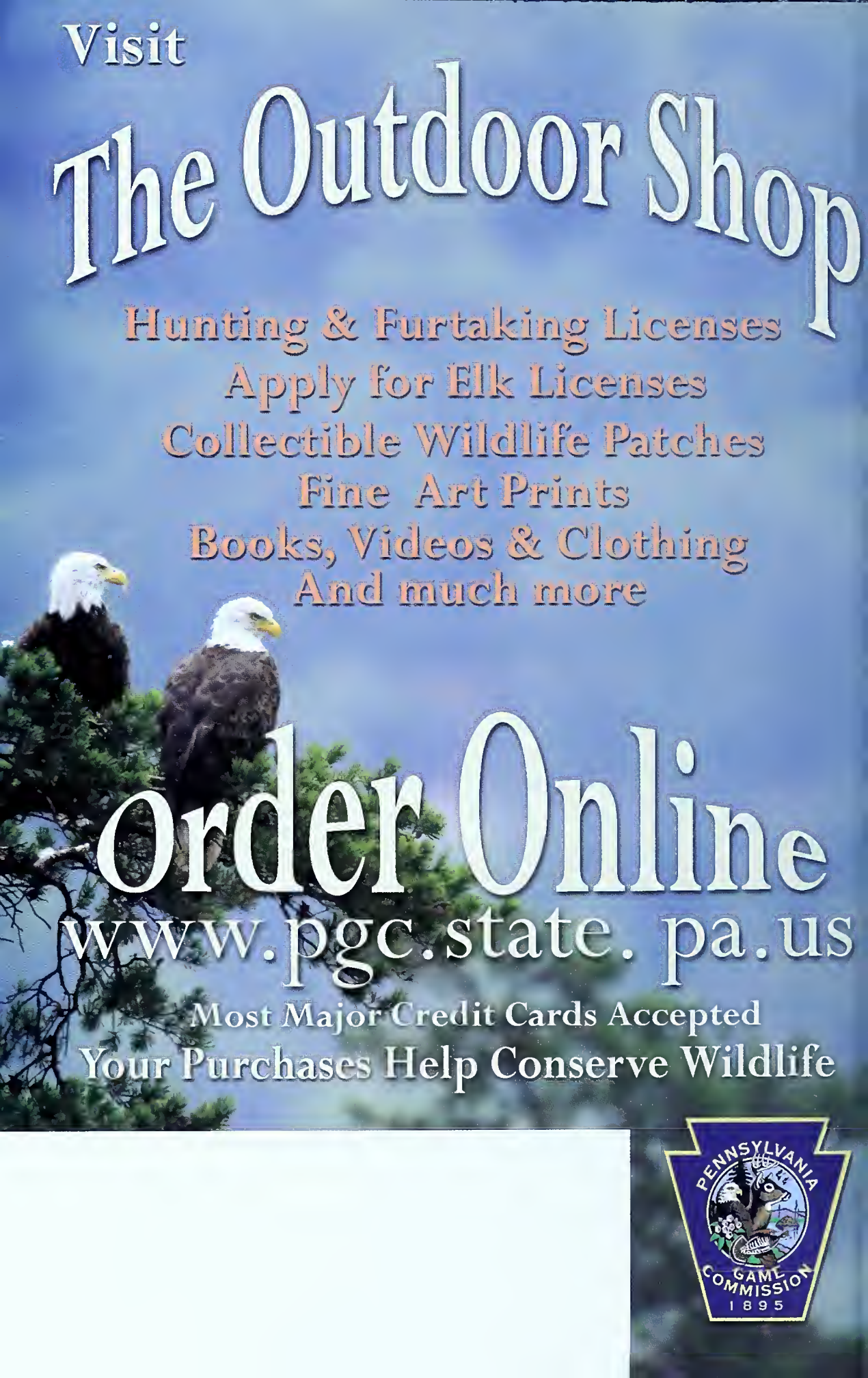
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editorial

Deer Season 2005-06

IN RECENT YEARS the Game Commission has been working to bring deer populations down to what the habitat can sustain, and populations have declined in many wildlife management units. Many if not most hunters have been seeing fewer deer as well, and from a hunter's standpoint, this can, understandably, be discouraging. It really is for the best, over the long haul, though, for our deer, other wildlife and even the future of hunting.

Many of us cut our deer hunting teeth in an era of overabundance, learning to expect to have a deer, or more, hanging by mid-morning the first day. Most of us, even if not getting a buck, would see dozens of does and fawns to keep the hunt interesting. This has influenced our expectations of what deer hunting is and our ability to understand and accept the deer management changes we're now experiencing. In many areas, particularly the traditional deer hunting mecca of northcentral Pennsylvania, getting a deer is more challenging than it's been in many decades. But this change is necessary for a better tomorrow, for deer, for wildlife, for our forests, and for hunting and hunters.

There are things we can do to increase our chances of finding deer, though, and this month is when to start making plans. First off, generally speaking there's likely to be the same or less deer around during this deer season than there was last year.

If you've not been seeing the number of deer you would like, start scouting now for the best habitat and cover in the area, and for foods preferred by deer. Study the terrain and surrounding habitats as well, and try to anticipate what deer movements are likely to be come fall. Not only are there fewer deer these days, with antler restrictions, we're hunting older bucks, which means smarter bucks, they're not likely to get caught out in the open once the season begins. Anticipating their movement patterns will greatly improve your odds. You may want to consider hunting somewhere else, where deer are more abundant — closer to home, perhaps — and in the October and post-Christmas seasons. Also, don't overlook DMAP areas; talk with the landowners or local managers about deer hotspots.

Although antlerless deer license allocations are lower than in the past few years, every WMU has more licenses allocated than what has been sold during the first week or so after the application process begins. Just get that first application in the mail so it's received on or soon after August 1. For nonresident and "unsold' antlerless deer licenses, check local news media or the Game Commission website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) to find where licenses remain. And again, consider DMAP. DMAP permits are separate from antlerless deer license allocations, and they're a great option for anybody who wants additional deer hunting opportunities. Furthermore, this year hunters may obtain two DMAP permits per property. For details, see page 53 of the 2005-06 Digest or the Game Commission's website.

The October antlerless deer seasons, the implementation of wildlife management units and DMAP, and the 2-week regular firearms antlerless deer season have all been implemented to better manage deer and provide hunters with as much flexibility as possible. They also have changed the face of deer hunting. To get the most out of the sport, hunters should consider changing, too. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:
I grew up in Crawford County and spent hundreds of hours hunting with my dad and our beagle, Dixie. Now stationed in Kuwait, I won't be sharing time in Penn's Woods with my dad and my sons until October 2006. My mother, though, sends me her *Game News* when she's done with them, and I share them with my soldiers, many of whom are now including a Pennsylvania hunts in their plans when they can return home. Thanks to *Game News*, the 28 months I must spend away from my wife and two sons is a little less difficult and definitely worthwhile.

R. Wills
MAJ, SC
Commanding

Editor:
Cutting the complimentary *Game News* subscriptions to school libraries is damaging, considering that one of our principal problems in hunting is the lack of youngsters entering the sport. For many youngsters, school is the only place they will ever see or read about hunting and trapping.

J. Kameen
Forest City

Editor:
Stopping the complimentary *Game News* to landowners in the public access programs is not being fair to the many who provide some of the best hunting ground in the state. Hunters are losing a lot of ground to "No Hunting" signs, and this move may lead to more signs.

T. Nicholson
Curwensville

Cutting the complimentary subscriptions to schools, cooperators and other groups was not done lightly, but those and other cuts were vital to keeping the agency solvent. Now, more than ever before, for the reasons expressed above, sportsmen ought to consider giving Game News *subscriptions to landowners who allow hunting on their properties, and to school libraries.*

Editor:
I was born and raised in Pennsylvania until I moved to Utah in 1992 to pursue a career as a park ranger. My parents recently visited me and my dad brought along a copy of *Game News*. I read it cover to cover within a day. My dad then surprised me with a gift subscription for Christmas. Every time I read your magazine I'm taken back to those Pennsylvania woods and hunting with my father.

Thanks for the memories, Dad, and the subscription to *Game News*.

J. Donnell
Rockport, UT

Editor:
I'm a lifelong reader of *Game News* and enjoy it greatly. However, I do have a question. In the April issue, in a story by Connie Mertz, there's mention of using a .223 to hunt deer. I have always thought that a .243 was the minimum caliber for deer.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

G. Werner
Pittsburgh

A .223 may be used during the regular firearms season for deer, but it's definitely on the light side and anybody using one should make sure they're using a bullet suited for deer. A .243 would be a better choice in most circumstances.

Editor:
A groundhog has burrowed a hole under our neighbor's shed, and one day our grandsons, ages 6 (twins) and 5, ran after him, to see if he was in his hole.

Later in the week I was working in my garage and found a box of mothballs. I threw several handsful down the hole, hoping they would encourage Mr. Groundhog to go live elsewhere.

A few days later, our grandsons were back and they asked Grandma if they could go check on the groundhog. The boys returned all excited, and when Grandma asked if they had seen the groundhog, one of the boys said, "No, but we did see a big bunch of groundhog eggs."

W. Silks
Dallastown

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



The Question

By Mark Foltz

SNAP! A twig breaks and leaves rustle. Faintly at first, the shapes of several deer emerge from the gathering dusk. The course they are on will put them within yards of me, and it is only a question of when they will detect my presence. At 15 yards they slam on the brakes. The lead animal turns and his eyes lock on mine. He is a handsome yearling buck with a nice 6-point rack. As he stands his ground a second buck moves up behind him. It's another 6-point, with shorter points but more width. My heart races with excitement. Finally a third and much larger buck appears. He has a great rack, much wider than his ears. He is an 8-point . . . no a nine; there's a double brow tine on his left side. This is the kind of buck I have wished for all of my life.

The deer soon sense that I do not belong here and quickly retreat back into the brush, leaving me once again alone in the dense July air, with only mosquitoes to keep me company. As I sit on a small rock outcropping, I am lost in thought. One question continues to linger. Why do I hunt? In a world where, at times, the popularity of the sport seems to have passed its zenith, we as hunters are called on more and more often to justify what we do. Are our actions and passions valid? Does this new

age have room for us? Hunting has changed so much since I first toted a gun into the field beside my dad some 35 years ago.

I head back down the hill excited about my sightings. This chance encounter will not be wasted. The location of the buck's bedding area is filed away in my mind for the upcoming season. I resist the temptation to venture back to this place, for I do not want this big buck to feel pressured in any way.

The 2003 archery season finally arrives and the first few days are spent hunting with a companion in the mountains of central Pennsylvania. Although the weather cooperates, with colder than normal temperatures for this time of year, the full moon seems to anchor the deer in their beds. Three days of hunting produce only one deer sighting, a forkhorn that seems to know he has nothing to fear being he is not legal game.

Returning home to York County, I'm able to get out on several evening hunts but see no deer. It seems they know the game is on. Finally, on the second Saturday, my luck begins to change. Hunting in the area where I had the July encounter, I'm surprised by a 4-point moving toward the bedding area. Where did he come from? In my mind I look for a shot opportunity and pick the spot I want to place my arrow but, of course, he is off limits and I watch as he continues on his way.

Minutes later, two more bucks approach from the hillside above me, and both are shooters. One is a 6-point with about a 15-inch spread. The other has more points but his rack is not as impressive. They mill about for several minutes before lying down just out of range. This proves to be a very unnerving experience. Finally an errant breeze sends a whiff of my scent their way, and they arise and begin a very stiff-legged and suspicious retreat.

I am not the least bit dismayed. Only a week into the season, I have seen four deer and they have all been bucks. I have the feeling that it is only a matter of time before it all comes together.

Several days later I am in the same tree on one of my after work hunts and a group of deer moves from the bedding area and heads for the distant cornfields. Hunting deer on small parcels of land in farm country is vastly different than hunting them in the mountains. The deer are more concentrated in their travel and bedding areas, but they seem to react quicker to any invasion into their territory. This type of hunting requires close attention to scent details, and hunters must enter and exit their stands as quietly as possible. The deer stay in the thick cover, and I see only one head; it's a buck. Again the deer pass above me out of bow range. It is obvious that I need to move farther up the hill.

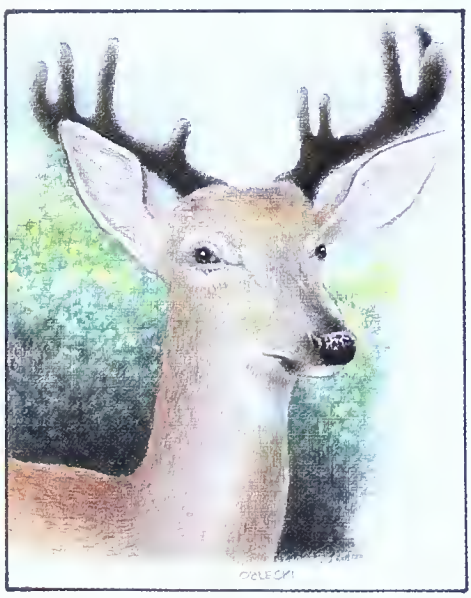
The next evening I do just that and immediately begin to see deer. I am in my tree only 20 minutes when two does emerge from the direction of the bedding area and pass below me. Several minutes later a buck with long sweeping spikes follows almost in their tracks. It seems like it is going to be a great evening.

Shortly after that, rain begins to fall. My thoughts drift to my July encounter, and in my imagination I see that beautiful 9-point approaching my stand from every possible direction, completely unaware of my presence. I snap back to reality as the cold rain permeates my clothing. For a while I am committed to waiting it out, but the rain continues to pick up momentum and I decide I've had enough. The deer this evening have all passed well below me, and as I climb down I decide to split the difference and move halfway toward my original stand.

With the next morning the first day of the fall muzzleloading season I think it may bring some extra activity into the area. The previous evening's rain had been a real soaker, and as I slip

silently to the new spot I had selected the night before, I wonder about the prospects of climbing a wet tree. The tree I had selected, it turns out, looks fine, but I still climb only about eight feet (not my preferred height), with my harness in place all the way. Darkness slowly gives way to cold morning light, and it is not long before I detect movement. The deer are traveling straight up the hill, well out in front of me. Seeing no antlers, I conclude that it's a mature doe with three fawns. As they near the top of the hill they fade away into the foliage. Several minutes pass and suddenly they reappear. Oddly, they have made a 90-degree turn and are on course to pass above me. All at once the fawn bringing up the rear bolts and runs away from the group. I am certain that the wind has not betrayed my position. An instant later it all seems to make sense. There is another deer, and no optics are necessary to see his 9-point rack. Even the double brow tine is plainly visible. We meet again.

Unfortunately, the deer are not on a path that will bring them within bow range. Even so, it is thrilling just to be on the sideline to watch the game. The



doe and fawns pass from my line of sight, but must have come to a halt because, suddenly, the buck stops as well. I can't see his body, but can see his neck and head. He raises his head and tests the air by curling his upper lip. Could he be in rut this early in the season, I wonder, knowing the rut is in November not mid-October. As if to dispel that notion, the buck grunts and continues to stand his ground. Trying to remain as motionless as possible, I slip my grunt tube to my mouth and let out three soft grunts. Nothing. I let out two more, and in a flash the buck takes off. Almost immediately I realize he is not responding to me. He is chasing the doe.

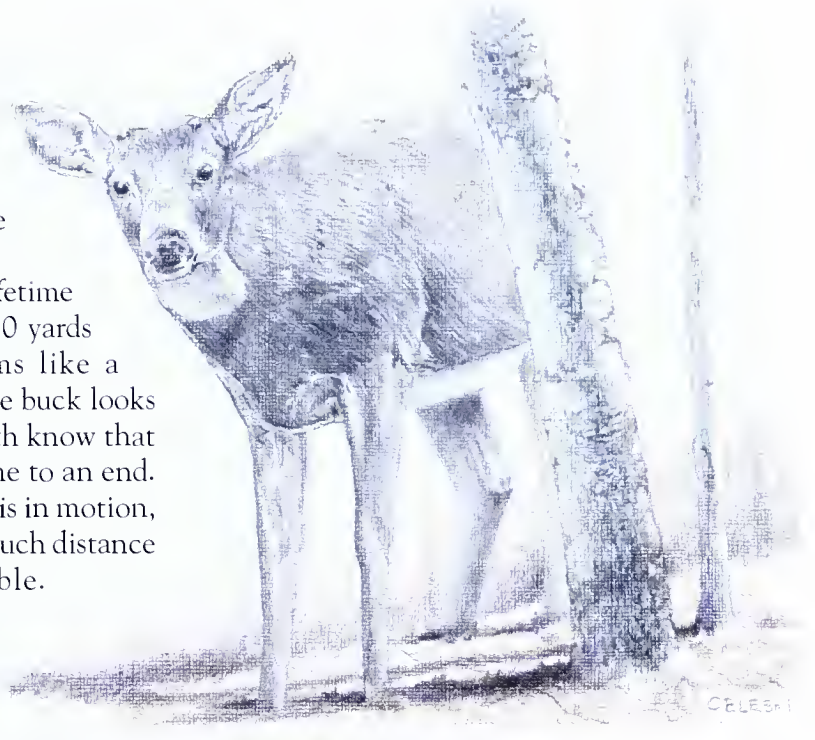
Having been a bystander on several rutting chases before, I know that from a treestand, a hunter's chances are not good in this situation. The only chance in connecting with the buck rests with the doe. If she passes close to your stand and stops, the buck may also stop.

As these thoughts rush through my mind the two deer begin making frenzied, sweeping circles. Instead of moving closer to me, however, they move farther away. Then, on the second circle, the situation changes. The doe's frantic course shifts and she runs flat out directly toward my tree. At the last second she veers off slightly above me, just out of view. Apparently she comes to a halt, for suddenly the buck stops about 25 yards away from me. Facing me; he presents no shot.

Out of the corner of my eye I catch movement. One of the fawns scampers down the hill in front of me, stopping a mere 10 yards away. Suddenly, in plain sight, I feel very vulnerable. For a few heart-pounding seconds we seem locked in freeze-frame; no one moves. Then, as if to break the spell, the fawn takes a few cautious steps toward me. The young deer seems compelled to point out the folly of my obvious position and looks directly at me. From this short distance I can see that the fawn is a button buck. The huge buck must already be aware of this fact and suddenly decides

the interloper must leave the area. In a mad dash the buck crashes through the brush and sends the youngster on his way.

Now the buck of a lifetime is standing less than 10 yards from me. It all seems like a dream. As if on cue the buck looks right at me and we both know that the encounter has come to an end. In an instant the buck is in motion, determined to put as much distance between us as possible. Then the most remarkable thing happens. After bounding only about 10 yards up the hill, the buck comes to a stop. Even more unbelievable, he does not return his attention to me, but scans the hillside for the object of his chase. With one swift motion my compound swings up, my pin finds its mark and the arrow is gone.



As the buck leaps up the hill the mark left by the arrow on its side is clearly visible. It's a good hit. He crashes through a blowdown from the summer hurricane, and I watch him until he is out of sight. I resist the urge to quickly climb down and begin the pursuit. The situation calls for maximum self-control to ensure the recovery of the animal. I decide to wait 30 minutes before taking up the trail. The minutes seem like hours and my body is racked with uncontrollable shaking. I make it only 20.

The trail is a good one, even in the rain-soaked leaves. At the top of the hill I see where the buck has crossed out into the open pasture. Finally, I peer through a fencerow of multiflora rose and see his motionless form. His head is held up off the ground by the sweep of his massive rack. Reaching down I grasp an antler and lift his huge head, freeing it from a tangle of meadow grass. I cannot believe I have been this fortunate.

As I stand beside him and gaze out across the rolling hills it is now clear to me. Why do we hunt? It is not about bagging game and putting meat in the freezer. Those things are just a bonus. The experiences a hunter has shape the way he views the world and the way he interacts with it. It cannot be adequately described to those who have not experienced it. We must continue to hunt because it is more than just a sport. It is a way of life. It provides us with solitude, escape from our harried lifestyles, companionship of a special kind, and a unique appreciation of nature and the God who created it. In a moment I feel complete and justified with who I am and what I do. We must protect our sport and our heritage. We must pass it on to the next generation.

Why do we hunt? It is not important that we discover an answer to the question, but that we keep asking it. For in asking it, we focus on the importance of what we do and treat the sport with the reverence and respect that is necessary for it to survive in today's world. □

One of the truest and best sportsman who ever shouldered a gun, strung a snare or set a trap was a woodsman from Potter County . . .

E.N. Woodcock Sage of Potter County

By Gregg Rinkus

POTTER COUNTY'S reputation as a sportsman's paradise is recognized far and wide. Few people have touted its virtues more enthusiastically than the legendary woodsman E.N. Woodcock. Eldred N. Woodcock was born in the tiny hamlet of Lymansville, on August 30, 1844. The village, which has long since disappeared from the map, was founded by his grandfather, Major Isaac Lyman, who held that military rank in the Revolutionary War.

From an early age, young Woodcock roamed the hills and valleys near Coudersport, four miles from his home. It was there that he began to hone the outdoor skills that served him well throughout his life. The burgeoning woodsman explored a Potter County much like the country found there today: "In those days," Woodcock wrote, "clearings were small, woods large and full of game. Deer could be seen in bunches every morning in the fields and it was not uncommon to see a bear's track near the house."

In other ways it was a time about which we can only dream. "Panthers were much talked of and occasionally one would be killed by some hunter or trapper. Wolves were not plenty though it was a common thing to see their tracks and sometimes hear them howl on the hills."

E.N. Woodcock was smitten by the hunting bug early in life. At the tender age of nine he smuggled his father's flintlock shotgun from the house and killed his first deer, a fair-size buck. When his parents discovered this transgression, the old double-barrel was taken from its usual corner in the kitchen and hung over the fireplace mantel, well out of young E.N.'s reach. Undaunted, Woodcock later wrote, "This did not stop my hunting."

With resourcefulness inspired by passion, Woodcock continued to hunt at every opportunity by borrowing a gun from a neighbor. Moreover, he would hide away the eggs of his mother's laying hens and take them to the grocery store where he would trade them for hunting supplies. Three dozen eggs brought him a pound of shot, a quarter-pound of powder and a box of gun caps.

Young Woodcock persevered, and when he reached the age of 12, his father relented and had a local gunsmith make his son a double-barrel shotgun. Throughout his life a good gun was among his most cherished possessions. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek he wrote, "I am still of the opinion that a gun is similar to a man's wife, you must love them in order to get the best results."



Woodcock's rural upbringing instilled in him a keen sense of adventure if not wanderlust. The lure of the hunt eventually led him to explore parts of Washington, Oregon and California, several Rocky Mountain states, and nearly every state east of the Mississippi River.

The southern states, in particular, made Woodcock truly appreciate his home stomping grounds of Potter County. A firm believer that drinking copious amounts of cold spring water helped relieve his chronic rheumatism, he discovered this tonic lacking in the South. So, Woodcock "concluded to hasten back to old Potter where chills, jiggers, ticks, fleas and poisonous snakes are unknown, and where the cold, sparkling spring water flows from the mountain side to your very door."

From 1903 to 1913, Woodcock pushed the quill for *Hunter-Trader-Trapper* magazine, the forerunner of today's *Fur-Fish-Game*. In 1908 his columns were assembled into an autobiography entitled, *Fifty Years a Hunter and Trapper*.

Although moss never grew on the soles of his hunting boots, the heart of this woodsman-writer belonged to Potter County. There, Woodcock pursued his favorite outdoor activity — deer hunting. His favorite hunting ground was the Black Forest region that extends through the southern parts of Potter and Tioga counties. As penned by Woodcock, "At this time the country in that section was an unbroken forest of pine, oak and hemlock with a good sprinkling of chestnut. As the saying was in those days, 'God owned the land in that section' so all we had to do was to go into the woods, select our campsite and proceed to build."

Woodcock's zeal for building camps may have matched his desire to hunt. Like every backwoods deer hunter of his day, nimrod Woodcock longed for the taller and wilder timber as he tried to get farther and farther from the *ting-tong* of cowbells.

During the mid- and late-1800s, Woodcock built hunting camps on Hunts Run, the West Branch of Pine Creek, and at the junction of the Bailey and Nebo branches of Young Woman's Creek. According to Woodcock, "There was no one living on any

of these streams for many miles."

In that era, night hunting at deer licks was an accepted — and legal — practice. "The blind at the lick was a scaffold built up in a tree 20 or 30 feet from the ground. I climbed to the scaffold and placed the old gun in the loops that were fashioned to limbs on the tree to give the gun the proper range to kill the deer should one come to the lick after it was too dark to see to shoot."

The use of dogs for driving deer was also legal, although Woodcock preferred to still-hunt whitetails rather than drive them. In his autobiography he wrote: "I would like to say right here that I do not like driving deer any better than I do the hounding and running of deer with dogs. The dog is all right but I want no dogging of deer for me."

Ironically, it was a dog that came to Woodcock's assistance in one of his most hair-raising escapades. "I was just in the act of climbing this log when a good-size buck went to jump the log also and we met, head-on. I had no gun and if I had I would have had no time to use it. I seized the deer by the horns and forced him back from the log with a startled cry at the same time. The deer, instead of trying to get away, seemed bound to come over the log to where I was, so I held to the deer's horns, not daring to let loose.

"I could keep him from raising over the log and after he tried several times to jump the log, he then tried to break loose from me, but I had the advantage of the deer owing to the log being so high that the deer could not pull me over, neither could the deer get in shape to strike me with his feet under the log. I think that I was so badly frightened at the sudden meeting with the deer, that I did not know what to do so I hung tight to the buck's horns and called as loud as I could for help, thinking that someone might possibly be passing along the road, which was not so far away, hear my call and come to my assistance, but no one came.



"A man by the name of Nelson lived about a fourth of a mile away, who had a large bulldog. The dog's name was Turk. This dog would follow me at every chance he could get. As no assistance came, I had about made up my mind to release my hold on the deer as my strength was fast leaving me, when I thought to call for Turk. I began calling as loud as I could and it seemed that the dog had heard my calling before I began, for almost before I was aware of his presence the dog sprang over the log and seized the deer by the hind leg, but the dog had barely grabbed the deer when the deer kicked him away from the path into the laurel.

In an instant the dog, with an angry yelp, jumped and seized the deer by the throat and in a moment the deer ceased to struggle and began to settle to the ground. As soon as I



dared to release my hold on the deer's horns I got my pocketknife out and sprang over the log and ran the knife blade into the deer's throat. The deer did not seem to notice the knife. I think that the dog had choked the life out of him. The battle was over and it was only a few minutes but it was the hardest battle that I have ever had and the dog came to my assistance none too soon for I could not have held on much longer."

In today's fast-paced work-a-day world, to take off an entire week to hunt deer is an uncommon luxury. Given that opportunity, many hunters still feel pressed to quickly return to the mainstream. Not so with Woodcock. By the time he was 17, his pursuit of "Old Golden" (all large bucks were given this name) took him into the big woods by the middle of October and typically he would not return until Christmas. "We had built our cabin on the divide between the headwaters of the Cross Fork of Kettle Creek and the headwaters of the East Fork of the Sinnemahoning. Deer, bear and fur bearing animals were plentiful that we were kept on a lively gait all the time." If the trapping was good, occasionally these adventures extended well into March. Mrs. Woodcock (and there was a Mrs. Woodcock) must have been an incredibly tolerant woman.

Woodcock and his contemporaries hunted for more than sport. "In those days, we made it more a specialty of hunting deer for the profit that was in it." Along with trapping, deer hunting became Woodcock's livelihood. "We hustled from early morning until long after dark . . . hardly a day passed that we did not kill at least one deer and some days two or three between us."

Deer that were killed many miles from their base camp were often sold to remote lumber camps. Others were either "jerked" or hauled by horse team to the nearest town or railroad where the meat was sold and shipped to New York or Philadelphia. "In those days, it was not uncommon to see sleigh loads of deer pass every day on the way to market. We got 15 cents for saddles and 10 cents for the whole deer."

His relentless pursuit of fur and game not only sharpened Woodcock's outdoor senses but also helped create a man of vision. After years spent harvesting vast numbers of deer, Woodcock became a strong advocate of game management. In Pennsylvania he was among the first to circulate a petition to prohibit the hounding of deer. He was appalled by "wasteful slaughter" and urged "all who are lov-

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ers of the woods and fields" to protect game and game birds.

In 1908 Woodcock wrote, "The timber in Pennsylvania is largely cut away now leaving bark slashings which make fine shelter for bear and wildcats. Deer are very scarce in this state; perhaps the most to be found in Pike County."

A few years later, in 1913, Woodcock further lamented, "There is much said as to the rapid decrease of game. Now, so far as this applies to deer, and observation extends over four counties of the state, at the present decrease of the deer, there will not be a deer left in these four counties at the end of five years and the deer law is being continually violated."

Woodcock's observations were almost prophetic. Not until stricter game laws were enacted and enforced and solid game management principles applied did the state's deer herd begin to rebound. During his lifetime Woodcock experienced some of the best and some of the worst deer hunting in Pennsylvania.

In times of plentiful game or of lean, no matter how far he roamed, E.N. Woodcock remained devoutly loyal to Potter County. In an open invitation he wrote, "Brothers, I will tell you where my camp is, and you will always find the latch-string out. My camp stands at the very head of the Allegheny River, 1,700 feet above sea level. From the cabin door you could throw a stone over the divide to where the water flows into the west branch of the Susquehanna. In a half-hour a person can, from my camp, catch trout from the waters of the Allegheny and the Susquehanna . . . Yes, boys, take your camp outfit and go out into the woods among the hills, streams and lakes. There you will find one of the most competent doctors and nurses that ever treated the ills of the human family." □

Days of Yore



R. D. "MIKE" SHOEMAKER, State College, sent in this photo taken in 1924 of a group of hunters who traveled to hunt in the Cross Forks area in Potter County. Several of the bear hunters are carrying Savage Model 99s.

How to Hunt Urban Deer

By Keith Kaufman

THEY'RE ALL AROUND US and we see them everyday, small patches of woods and thickets, within sight of our highways and housing developments. We never consider them as potential deer hunting locations. With all that human activity, how can there be any deer around, and who wants to sit in a treestand and listen to traffic?

However, the truth of the matter is that deer — including trophy bucks — are taken in some rather unlikely locations. Deer live on the edges of cities and towns all across Pennsylvania. If you overlook these areas, maybe it's time to rethink your deer hunting strategies.

Hunting buddies Steve Mellinger and Steve Wolfe have enjoyed tremendous success while hunting small patches of woods on the fringes of urban areas, and last season they experienced an incredible deer hunting adventure in just such a location.

Mellinger and Wolfe are from Lancaster County, and as is tradition for thousands of hunters from southern Pennsylvania, they for many years made the long drive to the mountains upstate and trekked in and out of the big woods. These hunting trips were productive; heading into the 2003 season, Mellinger had taken 19 bucks, including a buck for 17 consecutive seasons.

In recent years, though, they had become intrigued by the convenience of hunting some of the easily accessible small patches of woods within minutes of their homes. The spots they chose to investigate, small areas of woods and brush separated by farmland or other areas of open space, on the very outskirts of Lancaster, Mount Joy and Elizabethtown, would never get a second thought from many hunters. Then Mellinger and Wolfe spent time on the phone and knocking on doors, making themselves known to the landowners and seeking permission to scout and hunt their properties. Some turned them





STEVE MELLINGER and his trophy buck that ended up in the Conestoga River.

away, others said yes.

Scouting and hunting on the edges of urban areas have enabled Mellinger and Wolfe to make some interesting observations, and to develop unique, specialized, effective hunting tactics. They say it's surprising how even just a few trees and minimal brush can hold deer, especially well into the season, after hunting pressure has pushed many deer out of bigger woods.

Mellinger and Wolfe believe urban-area deer are more difficult to hunt than big woods deer, because they live in proximity to humans and know how to avoid them. Just like rabbits, deer in small patches of woods will completely conceal themselves in the tiniest amount of ground cover, and they'll often hold tight as hunters walk right past them. When they do move, they'll carefully use all available cover to avoid detection.

After several years of trial and error, and success, Mellinger and Wolfe have established one particular urban-area hunting tactic that has been very productive for them, especially late in the season. Instead of driving deer, they describe their 2-man approach as "bumping" deer. One of them is posted on the outside edge of a patch of small woods, in a location that enables him to look over as much of the woods and surrounding open areas as possible. Great care is taken to ensure that the spot provides shooting opportunities well away from the general direction of any homes or roads in the distance.

Beginning a considerable distance away, the other hunter then takes a slow, steady walk toward and through the woods. It's important to zigzag and cover the entire woods, as deer will sit tight. Don't worry about making a little noise, as urban-area deer are familiar with seeing and hearing humans. Wolfe believes the key is to walk leisurely, as if taking a stroll in the park. You can assume deer in small patches of woods can see you and are watching you as you walk, yet they're used to having people around. Wolfe stresses that it's important not to sneak, because sneaking provides the appearance of a predator and will make deer very uneasy.

Often, Wolfe says the walker will "bump" (not drive) deer out of their hiding spots. Not overly alarmed by the presence of a human, deer on the fringes of cities and towns will often trot a short distance, stop, look around, and then walk. Paying attention to the walker makes deer vulnerable to the posted hunter who has remained still.

Using this technique on the outskirts of urban areas has produced respectable bucks for both Mellinger and Wolfe. However, an amazing series of events a couple years back provided both of them with the most exciting hunting adventure either has ever experienced.

It all began on Friday, December 12, the second to the last day of the firearms season, and would carry over well into the next day. There were lots of challenges and exhilaration along the way, until finally, a very wet yet ecstatic Steve Mellinger, clad only in his long underwear, laid claim to his biggest buck yet.

During the afternoon of December 12, Mellinger and Wolfe staked out a small woodlot surrounded by fields, on a peninsula along the Conestoga River near the city of Lancaster. They had spotted big mature bucks when they scouted the area, and on this property, Wolfe had taken a 7-point and an 8-point in previous seasons.

Mellinger was posted near the edge of the woodlot, and Wolfe began walking, implementing their "bumping" technique. Suddenly, Mellinger glimpsed movement, in thick brush about 50 yards away, and he could make out antlers. He peered through his binoculars and instantly realized that sharing the small stand of trees with him was a trophy buck. The brush was too thick

to shoot, though, so Mellinger could only wait, and hope.

As Wolfe approached Mellinger's location, the big buck trotted out of the trees and into a surrounding field, where Mellinger could clearly see its high, wide rack. As Mellinger quickly put his scope on 9-power, the deer stopped about 140 yards away, still in the field and about halfway up the side of a hill. Taking careful aim with his .30-06, Mellinger squeezed off a shot, and the big buck stumbled and scrambled up and over the hill.

Mellinger and Wolfe made their way to the top of the hill and saw the staggering buck run into a thicket, where it lay down. By this time it was getting late and daylight was fading, so they decided they would come back very early the next day, the final day of deer season, to retrieve the trophy from the thicket.

It was before first light when, with deer cart in tow, they arrived at the spot where the buck had lain down. But, to their amazement, the buck was gone. During the night it had gotten up and moved. Mellinger and Wolfe began searching the thicket and all nearby brush piles, but were unable to locate any sign of the deer. Finally, in full daylight, a small drop of blood and tracks were found along a small feeder creek to the Conestoga River.

The tracks eventually lead Mellinger and Wolfe right to the edge of the Conestoga River where, astonishingly, they could see where the buck had slid down an embankment and into the water.

They walked up and down the riverbank, carefully looking for any sign that the deer may have come out of the water. They crossed a bridge and thoroughly searched the opposite bank, in case the buck had come out on the other side. After several hours, Mellinger and Wolfe headed back to their vehicles. Stunned that they couldn't find the buck, the two decided to look one final time. Four hours had passed since they began their search, and suddenly Mellinger heard Wolfe holler that he had found some blood. When Mellinger ran to Wolfe's location, Wolfe pointed into the river where, about 20 feet from the bank, Mellinger could see his trophy buck, dead in the water and lodged against a tree stump.

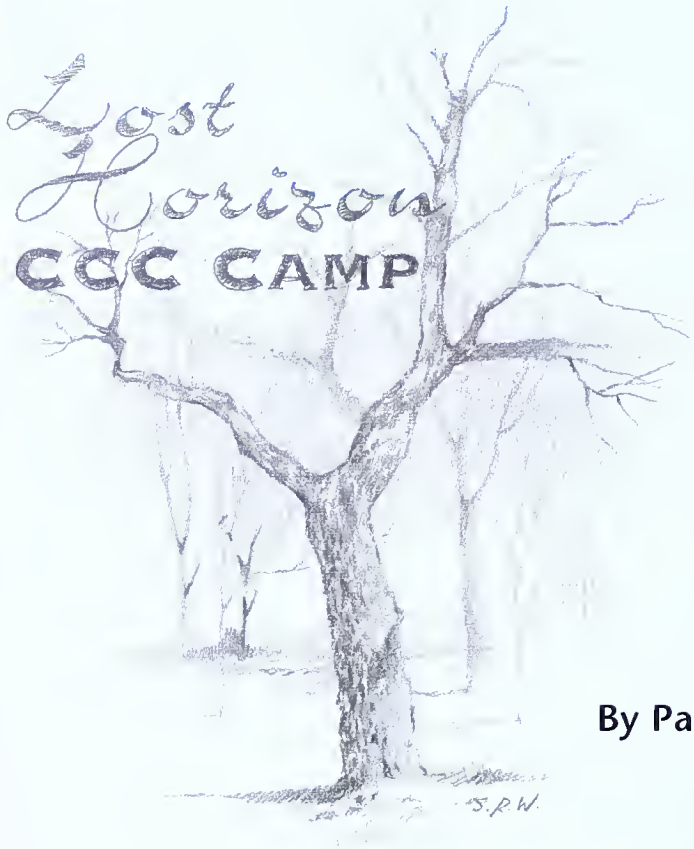
After a few moments of hugs and high-fives, they had to get about the business of retrieving the buck from the river. The air temperature was a brisk 27 degrees, and the water was just above freezing. It was Mellinger's buck, and he was going to fish it out. He stripped down to his long underwear and boots, and tied a safety line around his waist that Wolfe could use to pull him back if he were to slip or experience any difficulty in the water. Then Mellinger carefully waded into the river to recover his trophy.

Fortunately, the water was only knee-deep. Mellinger gradually made his way to the deer, grabbed it, and pulled it back to shore. It was a big, beautiful buck, indeed, an impressive 9-point. Finally, as Mellinger scrambled to put his warm hunting clothes back on, their incredible hunting adventure came to a successful conclusion.

The buck apparently had floated about 200 yards downstream from where it had entered the water, and without the tree stump in the river, there's no telling where the deer might have ended up.

On a butcher's scale the deer weighed 185 pounds, with an estimated live-weight of 225 to 230 pounds. With an 18½-inch spread and beams five inches in circumference, Mellinger's 20th buck was by far his biggest and most memorable, and it was taken only 15 minutes from home, on the edge of town. As Mellinger proudly claims, the huge 9-point urban-area buck was only his second "with antlers so big that they wouldn't fit in a lunch box." □

December 1, 1939



By Paul A. Matthews

I DIDN'T KNOW a deer could be so quiet. There was no snow on the ground and the fallen leaves were frozen crisp like toasted cornflakes. I couldn't take a single step away from the black cherry tree I was leaning against without making a racket that could be heard a hundred yards away. Yet when I turned my head to scan the woods behind me, there he was, not 40 yards away, almost broadside, with his head turned, staring straight at me. The little .32 Winchester Special carbine found its way to my shoulder, and after an instant glance through the Lyman tang sight to put the front bead midway up the shoulder area, I pressed the trigger.

That was 66 years ago come the first day of this December. Sixty-five years with a whole lifetime of hunting memories in between. In those days the opening day of buck season was always on the first day of December, regardless of the day of the week, except for Sunday.

On that long ago day, I had turned 14 less than a month earlier, and the little carbine in my hands had come from Sears, Roebuck, less than two months before. Yet having shot a .22 rimfire on a regular basis since a very early age, I was a pretty fair rifle shot.

How I had looked forward to this day. My very first day of real deer hunting in what we referred to as the "Big Woods," in the area around the old logging town of Laquin, then the site of the Lost Horizon C.C.C. camp. As my dad, Ben Segar and I walked through the camp that morning, the men were pouring out of their barracks

and lining up for the march to the mess hall. I squared my shoulders, stood just a little bit straighter, and carried my rifle with the muzzle up. I wasn't old enough to be in the C.C.C., but by golly I was old enough to go deer hunting and knew enough to carry the rifle in a safe manner. All one hundred pounds of me, standing straight as a bean pole and just about as big around, was bursting with pride. I was going deer hunting — as an equal with men.

On the far side of the C.C.C. camp, Ben Segar led the way into the hardwoods along an old logging trail that followed the course of a ravine. Already we could hear an occasional shot in the woods ahead of us, and each time it happened a wave of exhilaration surged up through me, almost lifting me off my feet. Ben would hold his hand up, and we would all come to a dead stop and watch the woods ahead of us for deer.

Because Ben was in the lead, he was allowed to slip a cartridge into the chamber of his rifle until it was certain that the deer was not coming our way. Dad and I stood dead still, scarcely breathing lest we scare the critter off. Finally Ben would let out a long pent-up breath and we would continue our way up the mountain.

Once we got on top, the land was fairly level and there were hardwood trees with an occasional hemlock for as far as the eye could see. Dad and Ben had been here before, and after a short time of looking around, they located the huge round boulder that marked the spot of our headquarters for the day. Just a few feet from the boulder Dad put me against a large black cherry tree that was to be my stand, and then he and Ben disappeared into the woods, each going in a different direction.

With a pride I can feel to this day, I slipped a cartridge into the chamber, closed the action and lowered the hammer to half-cock. Then I fed cartridges into the magazine until it was full and, finally, put my back to the tree and started watching for deer. Straight ahead I could see a full 150 yards down an old logging trail, and to my right I could see a fair distance down another old trail. Between the reaches of those two trails was a fairly dense slashing where Dad had predicted I might see a buck, and regardless of which way he traveled, if he crossed either of the logging trails I would have an open shot.

After settling in I concentrated my attention on the two logging trails and the slashing. Every few minutes I would cast a quick look over my left shoulder to scan the fairly open hardwoods behind me, just to make certain no wily old buck would try sneaking through. But in my mind I was certain that if one did try to sneak through, I would hear it. Nothing could move on those "cracker-crumb" leaves without making a racket.

In those days we didn't have all the warm hunting clothes and insulated boots you see in the woods today. All I had on my feet was two pair of heavy woolen boot socks and a pair of arctics. And for body warmth, a pair of longjohns, dungarees, wool hunting shirt, and the same hat and coat I wore to school. There was nothing out of Woolrich or L.L. Bean. It was what I had and it had to do.

After standing by that tree for half or three quarters of an hour, the cold crept in, nibbling at my toes and giving me spider-track chills the length of my spine. To get warmed up again, I left the tree and started walking the length of the logging trail. No, I didn't just take a walk. I'd take four or five cautious steps and then stop and scan the woods all around me, looking for the slightest bit of movement or any shape or spot of color that seemed out of place. This didn't really warm me like a brisk walk would have, but it started the blood circulating again.

A hundred yards down the trail I turned and headed back for the black cherry. I was still chilled but figured



my chances of seeing a deer were better by the tree where I could cover both trails. Maybe I walked a bit faster, and perhaps not as quietly as before. And after I had covered about three quarters of the distance, some slight intuition raised the fine hairs on the back of my neck. I felt my heart quicken, and I stopped and slowly turned around.

Right where I had stood just a few minutes before, at the far end of my walk, a deer stood in the middle of the trail, looking straight at me. A big deer — heavy, stocky. And then it was gone, melted into the woods like a dark cloud shadow, leaving me alone with my heart hammering and wondering if I really had seen antlers or just imagined it. Was it really a buck? Or just a big doe? Had I blown the only chance I'd get that day? Maybe the whole season?

I went back to my stand at the black cherry, suddenly conscious that I was warm clean through to the tips of my toes, and that if I was going to get a deer, I would have to be on the alert every second of every minute. I made up my mind I'd stay at the tree no matter what. I'd just have to put up with the cold.

I tried to sink into the thin warmth of my coat, wiggled my toes in the woolen boot socks, and tried to push the cold out of my body and mind while I concentrated on the two logging trails and the slashing they encompassed. Every minute or so I would cast a quick glance over my left shoulder, probing the open hardwoods, and then I would go back to the trails and slashing again, trying to conjure up a deer.

Why was it that no matter where I looked the woods were empty, not even a squirrel or chickadee — nothing but cold barren trees? Especially the cold. If I could just see a deer again, maybe it would warm me.

And then I was tired. I wasn't used to getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and hurrying around with the barn chores so that we could go deer hunting. Even going to bed early the night before hadn't helped a bit; what kid could go to sleep the night before deer season? It was worse than

Christmas 10 times over.

I shook the thoughts from my mind and tried to concentrate on the trails again. But they were as empty as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The whole woods were empty except for me, and then I shivered in the coat. Something nibbled at my brain and the hairs stiffened on the back of my neck. Slowly — ever so slowly — I turned and looked behind me.

I didn't know a deer could be so quiet. But there he was, not 40 yards away, standing almost broadside with his head turned and looking straight at me. The little .32 Winchester Special carbine snuggled against my shoulder, and with scarcely a second to aim, I pressed the trigger.

To this day, I don't remember seeing that chunky 6-point fall. Yet when I walked over to where he had stood, there he was, dead as a hammer. My first deer — my first buck!

Dad and Ben have been gone for years now, and the old C.C.C. camp is but a distant memory for old-timers who at one time were fortunate enough to have been there. I haven't seen those woods since the season of 1955, but if somehow I could just go back to any one moment in my life, I'd like to pick up that little .32 Winchester Special and start all over again on that frosty morning of Friday, December 1, 1939. □

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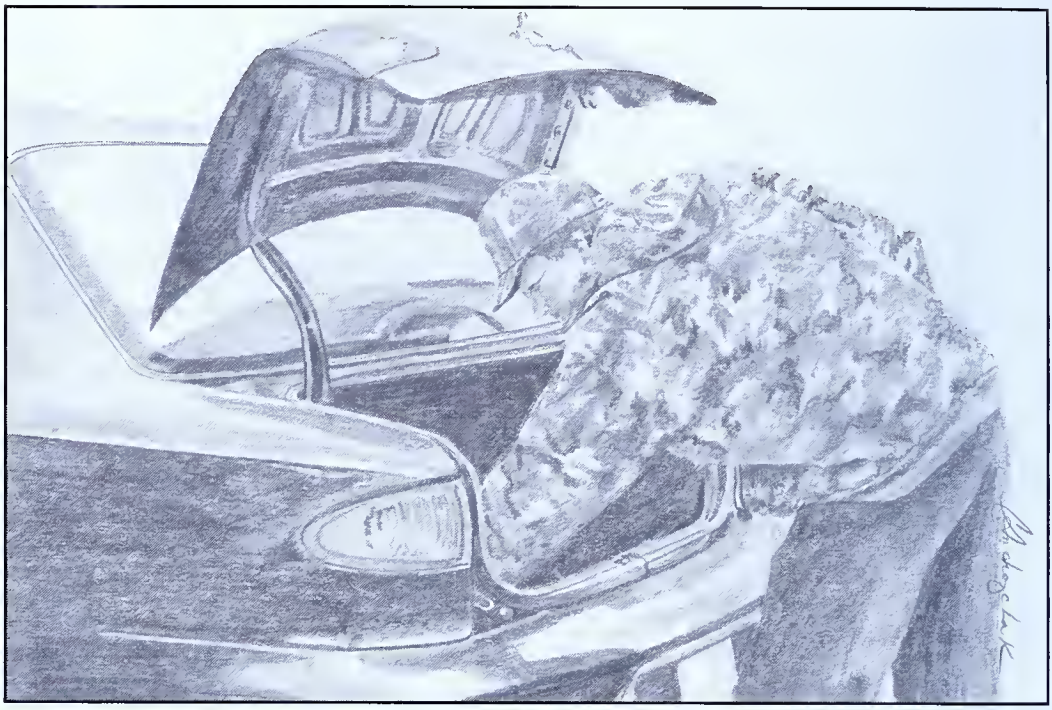
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A Roadhunting Date

By D. J. David
Adams County WCO
(Was serving in Delaware County when this incident occurred)

BOREDOM was setting in. I was sitting in my vehicle, late in the afternoon of the last Saturday of deer season, watching for road-hunters and wondering what my patrol plan would be at sunset and beyond. Deputies George Hinkle and Linda McCafferty were nearby in another vehicle, doing the same thing. Also in the area was Philadelphia WCO Jerrold Czech with my other deputy, Bill Cosenza.

About 3:30 a region office dispatcher called, informing me that a person had just reported finding a dead deer near his house soon after hearing a gunshot from the road. It was close by, and even closer to George and Linda, so I dispatched them to the scene. Arriving within five minutes or so, George spoke with the caller who showed him the deer — a young buck that had just been killed with a wound in the neck, only about 20 yards from the road and surrounded by several scattered houses in the wooded countryside in Chadds Ford Township, Delaware County.

George sent Linda to hide near the

dead deer, while he tucked his vehicle on an adjacent lane to wait. Meanwhile, I received a call about another possible violation, so I left the area, while Jerry and Bill stayed nearby as backup.

Within minutes the officers noticed a small white car slowly drive by, then back and forth twice. A short time later, with darkness rapidly approaching, the white car returned again. This time it pulled into a lane on the opposite side of the main road where George was perched and stopped. A man quickly got out of the passenger side and headed into the woods directly toward the deer. He walked within several feet of Linda, who remained quiet and still, and when he got to the deer, he tied a rope around its neck. As headlights from passing cars swept down the road, the suspect stopped and hid until they passed. Seemingly satisfied that he was unobserved, he quickly got the deer back out to the car and dumped it into the trunk.

As the vehicle then began to head down the road, George pulled out from behind and stopped it. As this was unfolding, I was heading back to the scene and was able to help with the vehicle stop from the front. Jerry and Bill also converged on the scene.

It turns out the man who got the deer had hunting attire, an unloaded shotgun and ammunition in the backseat. His girlfriend was driving. The buck was untagged, but both claimed they thought it was a deer that had been struck by a vehicle and they were just "picking it up for the meat." We seized the deer and collected a 12-gauge 00 buckshot round from the car. The two suspects stood firm in their story that they did not shoot the deer. With all our evidence gathered, we allowed the suspects to leave. A later examination of the carcass showed that a single small projectile had gone entirely through the neck.

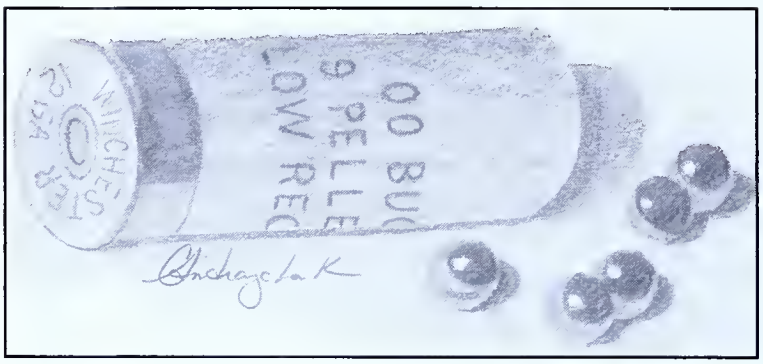
After considering everything we had, I believed we had a good case for filing a charge of possessing an unlawfully taken deer, being that it was obviously shot from the road, within multiple safety zones and was moved without being tagged. We also had the one witness who heard the shot and could attest that it originated from the vicinity of the road. But still, I was not satisfied.

A couple days later Deputy Rich Simpson and I returned to the scene. After searching through the woods where the carcass had been, Rich found a little hole in a tree. From the color and texture of the wood, the hole was fresh and just behind the location of the deer from the direction of the road. From it, we pulled out a small copper-coated sphere, which I thought was a 12-gauge 00 buckshot pellet.

Later, I knocked on the door of another house close to the scene. A woman answered, and after inviting me in, she recalled hearing a shot during the general time the incident had occurred and identified the origin as being toward the road. She also said that she quickly looked out the window and got a glimpse of a small light-colored car that immediately pulled away.

Soon after, we gave the two suspects another opportunity to be honest with us, but they still stuck to their story. At this point I thought I had enough evidence for more than just the possession charge. I was fairly certain I could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that they were the ones responsible for the actual shooting. But, in order to finalize everything, I sent the seized shotgun shell, along with the projectile from the tree to the Pennsylvania State Police crime laboratory for a more formal forensic comparison.

After several months, the lab results came in. It was determined



that the object found in the tree was, indeed, a 00 buckshot pellet, the same type of copper-coated projectile found in the defendant's shotgun shell. With this last piece of evidence, I filed charges on the couple, each with possession of a deer unlawfully taken and hunting through the use of a motor vehicle. Additionally, I charged the man with shooting in a safety zone.

A court date was then set, because the defendants pled not guilty. I had asked both of the witnesses if they would be willing to testify. They agreed, which surprised me, because from my experience many witnesses often ultimately don't want to "get involved." During the trial the two witnesses, several deputies and I all testified, which I thought was a marvelous display of concerned citizens and law enforcement working together for the benefit of wildlife conservation and public safety. The defendants repeated their tale of merely trying to pick up a roadkill. Because this was mostly a circumstantial case, I felt that every bit of testimony and physical evidence was critical. But all together, I believed, it painted an obvious picture of what the two had really been up to that afternoon. The judge seemed to agree, and found them both guilty on all charges. Afterwards, I thought what a strange way for a couple to spend a Saturday — on a roadhunting date. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Adventurous Life of a Vagabound Hunter, by Sten Cedergren, Safari Press Inc., 15621 Chemical Lane, Bldg. B, Huntington Beach, CA 92649-1506, www.safaripress.com, 326 pp., hardcover, $39.95, plus $5.95 s&h. There have been many claims of remarkable adventures in the safari business, but one would be hard pressed to find a life story that can top that of Sten Cedergren's. Born in Sweden, he set out to become a cowboy at a young age and ended up in Paraguay, South America. After an enlistment in the U.S. Army, and some further roaming, he ended up in Kenya at a time when most Europeans still carried a handgun in the streets of Nairobi. He eventually joined White Hunters Ltd., in addition to doing elephant control work. During his career, Sten was clobbered several times by African "Big Five" species, but he never considered it necessary to be treated at a hospital, which gives some insight into his toughness. Today, in his 80s, he is still hunting elephants in Zimbabwe.



"Just Add Bats"

Lori D Richardson
Wildlife Education Specialist

IT'S DARK AND COLD and I've been standing on the side of a mountain all night. About a dozen of us are huddled here, in the early morning, many somewhat befuddled from lack of sleep and not eating well for several days. In the background I hear the fluttering of hundreds of small flying mammals accompaning us. Headlamps are the only light, save the stars and moon, and only when necessary to identify the critters at hand.

We're not far from Altoona, in Canoe Creek State Park, and at the entrance of the Hartman Limestone Mine, one of the state's largest bat hibernacula. In the early 1900s Mr. Hartman conducted a mining operation here that closed during the Great Depression. The old mine's location and character make it an ideal hibernaculum for more than 22,000 bats representing six species and including about 600 of the federally endangered Indiana bats.

Inside the mine, tunnels finger out at varying levels, creating a temperature gradient — the deeper you go, the cooler it gets. There are many pits and domes where the tunnels and natural cave features meet to form microclimates. The partly closed entrances restrict human disturbance and trap cool air inside the mine, creating cool and stable temperatures in the lower levels. The microclimates and distinct temperature gradient enable bats to find optimal temperatures throughout the mine all winter long.

The mine is also within a mile's flight of many feeding areas where the bats find a steady summer food supply. A retired church, two miles away, now managed by Canoe Creek State Park, is the second-largest maternity roost for little brown bats, several I-bats have been found roosting there also.

We are here to trap the exodus. The bats are awakening and leaving their winter roost, traveling through the maze of tunnels toward one of the three exits from the mine. Two of the exits this night are set with harp traps — a plastic tarp with a large rectangular opening near the center, draped over the mine exit. The plastic



Cal Butchkoski

INDIANA BATS are around three inches long with a wingspan of about 10 inches. The transmitter weighs .41 grams and has a battery life of 21 days.

directs exiting bats into two rows of fishing lines hung vertically and spaced about two inches apart. As bats come through the gate, their echolocation detects the first row of lines. They pull their wings in to pass between two filaments, and then open their wings, hitting the second row and sliding down the lines into a catch tarp at the bottom of the trap. Every hour, we check the traps and gather the bats into a small metal-mesh and plywood cage just over a foot square. From there we head down to the tailgate that serves as a central meeting location and a flurry of identifying begins.

"Female little brown," says one volunteer.

Another, "Two females."

Still another, "Male non-reproductive."

The volunteers and biologists pull bats from the cage one or two at a time. Each bat is passed through an electronic scanner that checks for a pit-tag (like a bar code placed under the skin as part of a band-retention study). They are then identified by species, sex and reproductive status before being set free.

The great majority of bats this night (several hundred) are female little browns. We're hoping to catch six female Indiana bats for a telemetry study, to learn where these animals go to forage, roost and raise their young during the summer. When an Indiana bat is identified, the biologists first check for an ID-band indicating that the bat has been caught previously. If it doesn't have a band, one is attached.

The first I-bat we catch is a female with no ID tag. She's now known as 386PGC by the yellow plastic band on her left wing. The length of her ears, tragus (part of the ear), forearm and foot are measured. Also noted are the entrance where she was captured and the time of capture, in this case the third entrance and second capture. She's weighed by placing her in an upside down pill vile on a small digital scale where she registers a healthy 6.4 grams (less than the combined weight of a dollar bill and a quarter). Then we set her aside in a quiet spot and continue trapping.

The transmitters these I-bats will don are .41 grams (less than a paperclip) and about a third the size of a dime. The battery life should allow biologists to track them for about 21 days — but bat tracking is tricky business. To do this, it will take several vehicles on the ground and an airplane. The plane is outfitted with two antennas (one on each wing) and a sound filter, switchbox, headphones, real-time GPS feeding into digital maps on a laptop recording the trip, and ground communications equipment. All this, the pilot and PGC biologists Cal Butchkoski and Patti Barber squeeze into the small cockpit for hours of intense listening and tracking both day and night.

The ground crew, in several vehicles,

To view clips of ground crew chases and other video from the I-bat project visit www.batmanagement.com. To learn more about this PGC project and Indiana bats visit www.pgc.state.pa.us click on *Wildlife* then *Bats*.



"Just add bats." Butchkoski always utters an appeal for good fortune as the last step in setting up traps. JULIE WINNER, foreground, a volunteer from Skelly & Loy Inc. consulting firm, BUTCHKOSKI and AURA STAUFFER, DCNR wildlife biologist, collect bats from one of the traps.



Below, volunteers KEN SMITH, foreground, and CHRIS JOHNSON are environmental consultants with the Eads Group. Smith is passing a bat through the halo scanner to check for pit-tags.

are set up much the same, including a directional antenna, a laptop with real-time GPS, digital maps and a 2-way radio. In some vehicles there may also be a passenger to help, allowing the driver to concentrate on driving very quickly through unfamiliar territory in pursuit of a bat that can travel up to 30 mph and doesn't have to follow roads or traffic laws. As you might imagine, the ground crews have some pretty intense and exciting experiences, as do any locals who happen to cross their path in the wee hours of the morning.

Here is a quote from the daily email updates provided by Butchkoski regarding the first hours of the pursuit:

"We finally managed to tag six female Indiana bats Sunday night (4/17). In the air we managed to keep track of five of them until one took off heading east taking the ground crew with it. In one night that bat jumped Lock Mt, Tussey Mt, the Raystown Lake, Sideling Hill, Jacks Mountain, the Kittatinny ridges, crossed I-81 and finally went to roost atop South Mountain overlooking and north of Caledonia State Park! That's a straight-line run of 60 miles.

"The priority will be to stay with the bat that's traveling the fastest in hopes that it will get to the final destination without any long layovers before the batteries fail. Plan to be in the air again tonight . . . "

That lead bat finally came to roost 92 miles from the Hartman mine, just over the Maryland border, in a hickory tree with about 20 other bats. Biologists believe this to be her choice for a maternity roost. A second bat also ended her spring migration in another Maryland hickory with more than 60 other bats about 84 miles from the mine. The PGC coordinated with the MDNR to continue monitoring until the transmitter batteries died. Other bats were lost in the flight-restricted areas of Camp David, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, and the Philadelphia, Baltimore and DC airports.

This year's telemetry project is the first time Pennsylvania has monitored the species to find summer maternity colonies and the first time wildlife agencies in New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland have coordinated efforts to study bats that migrate in this region. PennDOT and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service helped fund the project. □

A day of fall turkey hunting ended in a battle for Donald Baker's life.

Turkey Hunter Becomes Prey

By Judy Wolfman

AFTER AN UNEVENTFUL day of turkey hunting in Cameron County, Donald Baker unloaded his rifle, eager to return home to York County. On the walk back to his truck, a slight rustling sound made him glance up, and he saw a 6-point buck heading right for him. "He looked to be 110 to 120 pounds, but I later learned he weighed 140," Baker says.

Baker yelled, trying to scare the buck away, but as it got closer, he realized it wasn't going to run off. "I tried to load my rifle, but didn't have time. The deer locked its antlers on it and pushed me," Baker says. He kept hollering, hoping the buck would come to its senses and run away. But the buck had other ideas. He twisted his head and flipped the rifle from Baker's hands. "Then I knew I was in trouble," Baker says. The buck charged again, and this time Baker grabbed it around the neck. "I held him tightly and we both rolled down a nearby bank. I don't know how we managed to reach the bottom, with all the saplings and underbrush in the way."

For the next 15 minutes, the 210-pound Baker and 140-pound buck wrestled. "At one point, he calmed down and I let go, thinking I could run behind a tree and get away. But as he ran past me, he turned, saw me, and came toward me again."

This time, the 40-year-old Baker grabbed the buck by the antlers, wrestled it to the ground and twisted its neck. To hold the deer down, the 6-2 hunter wrapped his legs around the buck's neck. "My one thought was to hang on, no matter how long."

By then it was 5:15 p.m. No one was around; Baker's cries for help went unanswered. Hungry, tired and getting weaker, he wondered if help would ever come. But he didn't want to risk letting go. "I didn't know if I'd have the strength to get him to the ground again. I knew if I let him go, he'd finish me off, so I hung on."

And hang on he did, for four hours, until finally, Baker saw flashlights gleaming through the woods, and his shouts brought two men. "I'm not letting go of this thing until you get it tied down," Baker told the two guys.

The men tied the buck, but within

seconds it kicked the bindings loose and attempted another attack. Finally, one of his rescuers had to shoot the buck.

Relieved, Baker tried to stand up, but couldn't. He was unaware that he had been severely gored while wrestling the buck, he was in shock, and his teeth chattered uncontrollably from hypothermia. He was transported to the hospital, where he received 60 stitches in his groin and face.

In spite of his injuries, Baker refused to be admitted to the hospital, so he was released and returned home at 2 a.m. "I didn't realize until it was over how hurt I was," Baker says. "I hadn't felt any pain — I guess my adrenaline kept me going. Fear will do that, I suppose."

Much later, Baker learned the story of the charging buck. It was a well-fed, 2½-year-old domesticated "pet" that had escaped from its pen and traveled about a half mile across the mountain. Its owner had called the Game Commission the next evening to report her pet missing, and was obviously upset when she heard what had happened.

Some of Baker's friends told him that they had seen a deer earlier, rubbing its antlers against the bark of a tree and tearing into the bushes, acting very angry. Perhaps it didn't know how to interact with wild deer, which turned into a real problem during the peak of its mating season. "Being domesticated explains why it didn't run from me," Baker says.

Bruised, stiff and sore, Baker remained at home for about a week, then resumed his normal life and interest in hunting for bear, deer and turkey.

Looking back on the event forever etched in his memory, Baker says philosophically, "You can't turn a wild animal into a domestic Walt Disney-type pet. It just doesn't work that way." □





U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Atlantic Flyway Wing Bee

By Chad R. Eyler
York County WCO

THIS PAST January I spent six days at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual Atlantic Flyway Wing Bee at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland. Annual wing bees have been held in each of the four U.S. migratory waterfowl flyways since 1961. Although the wing bee's name may indicate that it is a contest, it is far from it. The purpose of the wing bee is to identify, sex and age ducks and geese via wings and tail feathers submitted by hunters. The USFWS uses the information to produce annual waterfowl harvest reports. Pennsylvania is within the Atlantic Flyway, and each year Atlantic Flyway waterfowlers submit approximately 20,000 wings and tail feathers to be identified, sexed and aged. The cooperation of waterfowl hunters is vital to the process of accurately estimating the waterfowl harvest.

Those who hunt migratory game birds in Pennsylvania must purchase a migratory game bird license each year, and in doing so, they register in the federal Harvest Information Program (HIP). Through HIP, hunters provide information that helps biologists manage our migratory game bird populations. The program is based on a survey of randomly selected migratory bird hunters. When hunters purchase their migratory game bird license, they are asked to voluntarily answer several questions

about their hunting experience the year prior. The answers to these questions are used to help the USFWS mail different types of surveys to the appropriate type of hunters. For instance, if someone harvested many doves but no waterfowl, they'd be more likely to receive a survey regarding dove harvest than waterfowl harvest. The survey data is later used to develop harvest estimates for migratory game bird species.

Some hunters are also asked to submit one wing from each duck and the primary and tail feathers of each goose they harvest. Hunters send these parts, along with the state, county, town and date of harvest, as well as band number (if applicable) to the USFWS. It is vital that hunters supply accurate information about the parts they submit in order to produce reliable harvest reports. As waterfowl seasons open and parts and information start to arrive, USFWS personnel separate the parts by species only.

The next stage in the process is the wing bees. Each of the four U.S. migratory waterfowl flyways has a wing bee. The USFWS requests that each state in each flyway send a representative knowledgeable about waterfowl to assist in identifying, sexing and aging the submitted wings and tail feathers. Biologists and aides from the USFWS oversee the process. At each wing bee, approximately 30 personnel examine wings and tail feathers from puddle ducks, diving ducks, sea ducks, geese and other migratory waterfowl. Some waterfowl species can be accurately sexed and aged only by measuring a portion of the wing, while other species require only an examination of individual feathers. The staff also checks harvest information for each submitted part. This data collection process takes several hundred man-hours.

For more information, visit the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Harvest Information Program website at **http://hip.fws.gov/**.

The information and waterfowl parts supplied by hunters are vital to an accurate year-end harvest report. The wing bee supplies a breakdown of data about each individual harvest, by location, species, sex and age. This information, along with hunter surveys and HIP data, make up the information found in the year-end waterfowl harvest report. The USFWS sends waterfowl hunters who participated in the parts collection process a report about each of the parts they submitted, including the species, sex and age of the birds they harvested. The wing bee is just another impressive example of hunters and wildlife management agencies working together to help manage and conserve wildlife today and into the future. □

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



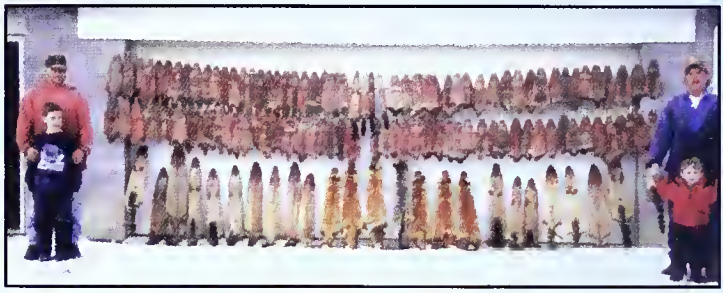
WATERFOWL seasons are set in September. Bag limits differ with species, so identifying your target is important. Two female mallards, on preceding page, flank a male. Left, two wigeons accompany a redhead.

Odds &

We receive many photos, mostly of deer, turkeys and bears, but we also get other interesting pictures from readers that we're sure you'll enjoy seeing.



BILLY EVERETT, Wilkes-Barre, enjoys hunting bunnies in Wyoming County during the winter small game season.



KEVIN KILMER, left, Mifflintown, with his son NATHAN, and brother DOUGLAS with his son CLAYTON, and their season's fur harvest. Trapping is a family tradition.

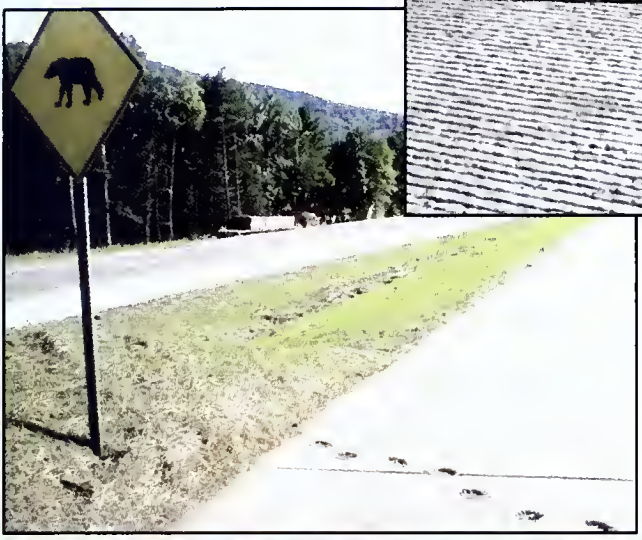


DR. DAVID HENZLER, Ephrata, shot this 38-pound coyote in Bedford County. He said it was the lead coyote in a pack of four or five animals

SONNY MILLER, Mechanicsburg, found these six young gray squirrels at the base of one of his trees. Sensing something not quite right, after taking a closer look he noticed that they were knotted together by the tails. Sonny took them to a veterinarian, who was able to untie them, and then brought them home and released them near the same tree.



Ends





RICK MASON from PennDOT took these photos of bear tracks near the bear crossing sign made just after the median had been paved. This stretch of highway is just below Trout Run in Lycoming County. I guess the bruin couldn't read the "wet paint" signs.



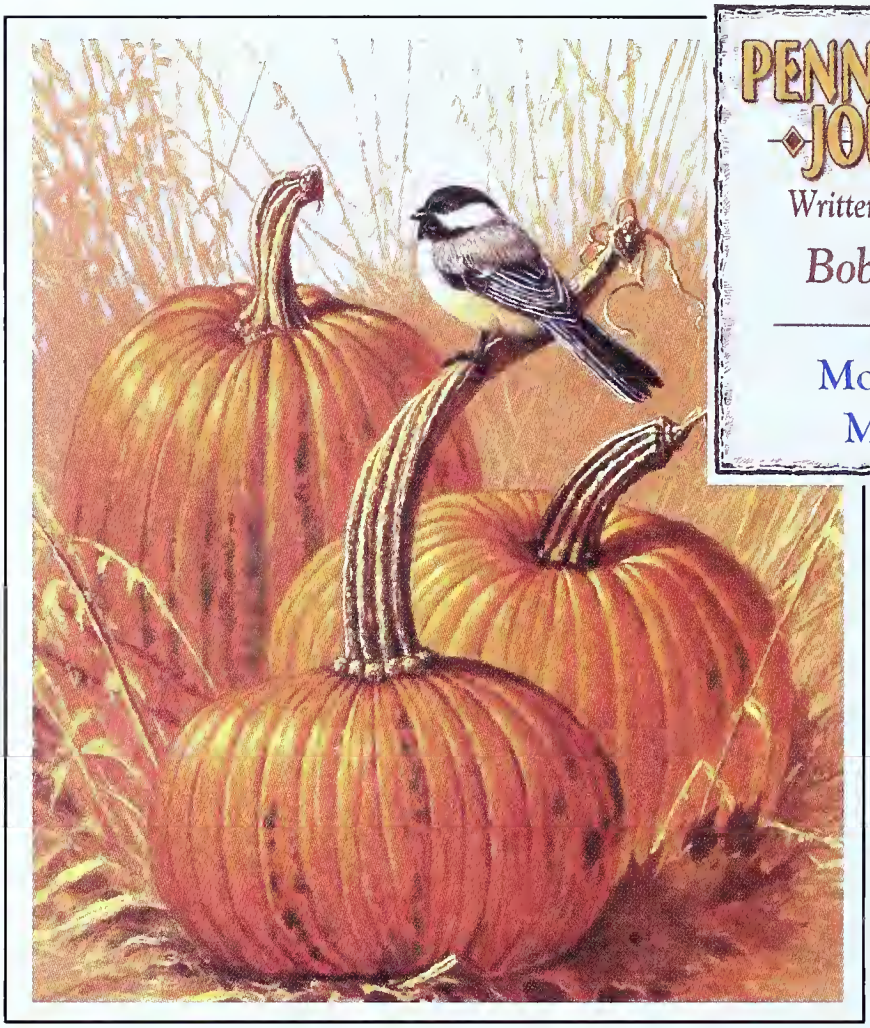
DAVE BENNER, Bellefonte, sent in this photo of a successful trapping season.



Look at the size of this coyote trapped in Bucks County by DON NEHODA from Doylestown.



Left to right: VINCE GIRDANO, DANIEL KRAUSE and GLENN KRAUSE with some early season Canada geese taken in Butler County.



PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by
Bob Sopchick

Moment by Moment

THERE'S much to be said for seeking some connection with the natural world every day. No matter how brief or incidental, even a few moments reverberates within the mind and heart, stirring remembered images and experiences. Sounds and smells and other sensations usher forth; the howl and bite of the wind on a frigid hilltop in December, the plump swell of a grouse held in the hand, the aroma of crushed peppermint leaves near a childhood creek. It is possible to sense the splendor of an entire summer just from the sunlight flashing off the wings of a goldfinch.

Most encounters with wildlife are brief. Over time, the images we collect are like individual film cells that when spliced together become, in effect, a film, a unique and insightful perspective of our collected experiences.

Some elements of the outdoors may be studied at leisure. The profile of a favorite mountain remains, for the most part, a constant. As years pass, we may come to know certain trees as we do friends. Rock outcroppings and even stumps become as familiar as furniture in our homes. Today, however, we cannot take for granted the permanence of familiar landmarks. In the blink of an eye the dark waters of a wetland can become the dark macadam of a highway or parking lot.

All elements of the natural world are more temporal than ever before, and it is important to garnish as many images as possible at every opportunity. It is in that spirit, then, that I would share with you a few images and thoughts from my fortunate tenure in Penn's Woods.

IT HAS BEEN a good year for pumpkins; garden centers and rural produce markets spill over with a bountiful crop of the yellow gourds. The farm stand I stop at has them

arranged according to size on stairstep displays. I am less concerned with size than character, though, and I scrutinize the vast assembly with the eye of a casting director, selecting a half dozen for the autumn display.

As I load the pumpkins into the station wagon, a bit of motion catches my eye in the weeds at the edge of the parking lot. A band of chickadees works through the goldenrod stalks and milkweed. One perches momentarily on the curled tendril of a pumpkin stem and pecks at it before moving on with the others into the woodlot.

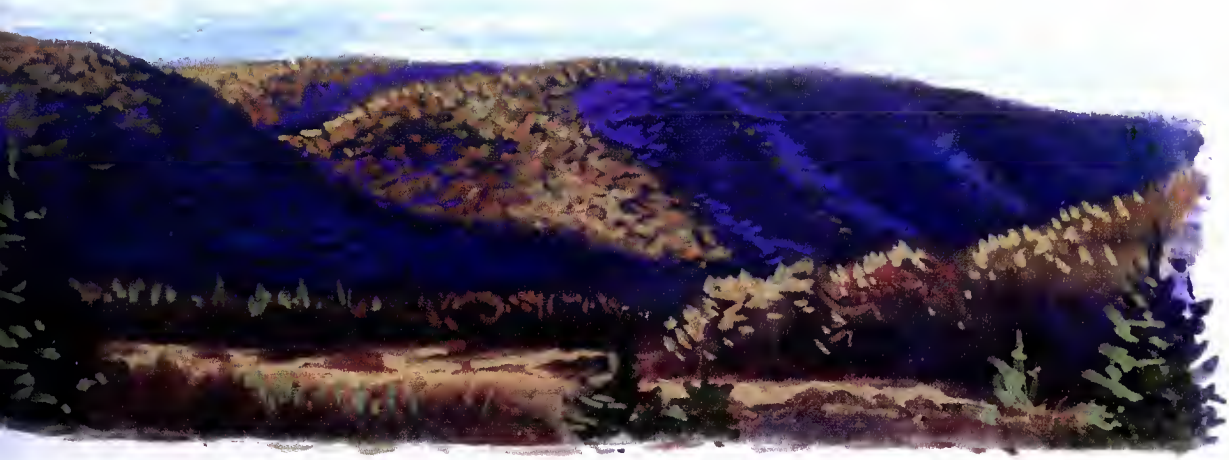
As always, I am cheered by the sweet vocalizations of these common birds and admire their natty formal attire. It is the hunter within, though, that recalls somber mountain hollows that were suddenly brightened by their antics as they gleaned the bark for precious protein. I recall having one near enough to see that its eye is not black, but dark brown.

A recent study of chickadee vocalizations shows that their complex warning calls are packed with information that can describe to others the kind and size of a nearby predator. While chickadees show little fear of humans, those in the far reaches of the forest seem more amicable than those that frequent my backyard. Once, one clung onto my bowstring for a moment then launched away, and while deer hunting in December, I had one light on the brim of my fluorescent orange hat.

AS ONE WHO GREW UP in the folds of our western highlands and moved long ago to the ancient sea plain of the southeast region, I can testify that certain mountains never leave the heart. They remain as steadfast in memory as any loved one, and I have but to close my eyes to recall the exact profile of the distant forested hills across the valley from my childhood home.

I recall sitting on the porch and watching summer thunderstorms build and muscle into the valley from the west, then barrel across the floodplain like a runaway freight train, a sheer wall of rain hissing as it swept across, pelting the big canvas porch awning. After it passed, the sweet refrain of the robin's rain song would rise like the wisps of steam from the street, and beyond, the gentle lilt of a wood thrush would trickle down from the woods.

One of the first drawings I ever did was of those hills, and here, 45 years later, I offer another. The undulating hills of Pennsylvania do not tower as monuments of majesty like the mountains of the West. Ours are not peaks to be conquered, but forgiving slopes to be wandered upon; the gentle folds enveloping our lives, offering a sense of security and well-being, as well as a sanctuary for wild things.



I HAVE difficulty sleeping when the moon is full. The thin, pale light that seeps around the drawn blind reminds me that the wild churns on. I think of deer feeding in the fields, fawns playing tag, raccoons exploring gravel bars. I visualize secretive bears skirting the edges of civilization, their black forms in the moonlight darker even than their shadows. I think of the many faces of the moon; of hiking across a frozen swamp by the light of a cold blue moon, the warm glow of an enormous Hunter's moon rising over the cornfields; of the time in early morning when I watched a crow fly across a broad field, exactly connecting the moon and the sun that shared the same sky.

On this night, the first day of summer, the moon is soft-edged and yellow and hangs low in the southern sky. It is very quiet, not a breeze stirs. At exactly 3:08 a.m. a great horned owl hoots a series of soft 2-syllable notes from the pine out back. Our dog Pete growls and whines. I quiet him down, then go out to listen. I can't see the owl, but I hoot back. The owl answers immediately with a bit more volume. We exchange calls, with me starting whenever he tails off, and a running conversation ensues. The owl issues forth booming hoots that echo across the neighborhood, but I slip up when I come back with the loud 8-syllable cry of a barred owl, which ends with a loud *whooo-ah*.

A dog begins to bark and is joined by others. A porch light flicks on down the street. The owl flies on a snapline out of the pine and into the east where he will meet the dawn. Satisfied, I turn in and wait for first light.

I FIND A COTTONTAIL dining on dandelion stems. It's a big buck rabbit, and I'm amazed at how animated it is. Usually we see rabbits frozen defensively in place, unblinking as we pass by, but this one is behind a thorny hedge, and at the slightest hint of danger it flattens on the ground, ears laid back, then pops right back up when the threat passes. It stands on its hind legs and clips leaves from a shrub, and after eating, washes itself at length like a cat, then lies on its side under the shrub, and with head tilted up, dozes peacefully.



Rabbits remind me of deer, perhaps because I love to hunt both on drizzly November days when the chill air is still and heavy. Both have white tails and their coats are much the same color, with tiny black chevrons that follow the hair tracts. A deer will sometimes sit as tight as a cottontail until it is kicked out of a weed patch.

Cottontails and whitetails like thick cover, and rabbits can wriggle through the slightest opening. I watched Pete chase the same big rabbit mentioned earlier at full tilt across the lawn and the rabbit hardly gave pause when it squeezed through the measured 1¾-inch gap between fence slats. One archery season I retrieved a whitetail from the bowels of a nightmarish briar patch that was thick as a scouring pad, belly-crawling through openings scarcely a foot high. When I finally reached the deer it was hard to say which one of us had lost more blood.

WATCHING A WOODCHUCK through binoculars the other day, I was struck by how noble a big chuck appears when he stands to survey his domain. The rotund chuck is the burgomaster of summer hayfields. With his grizzled coat, dark paws and alert



expression, the woodchuck is no less handsome than a bear.

Years ago I painted a portrait of a woodchuck, and had exhibited it on several occasions. People always smiled when they saw it, but no one was even remotely interested in buying it. My wife said that it looked as if the chuck was waiting for a bus. Every Groundhog Day I make a huge meatloaf shaped like a woodchuck, and hang the painting above the fireplace. The meatloaf is quickly devoured by my family, and the painting is just as quickly put back in storage come February 3.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS paintings and photographs of ringnecks rising from corn stubble, of grouse rocketing through grape tangles and woodcock flitting through alders, but not too many of mourning doves in flight. The dove is born to fly; the other gamebirds, including bobwhites, are ground-dwelling species.

I was riding as a passenger in my friend's sports car when a pair of doves flushed from the gravel on the side of the country road where they were picking up grit. They flew parallel to my window for a while, and kept up right nicely in flat even flight. Traveling down the straightaway, I focused on the eye of the dove nearest to me, and for one instant it seemed I was flying with them.

Last dove season I was directed to a good spot next to a walnut tree at the confluence of several cornfields. I was shooting a 20-bore Thomas Bland British hammer gun, with Damascus barrels the rich color of chestnut, and with a similar burl. It is elegantly proportioned, light and slender, but with plenty of barrel length to keep it swinging. I take special pleasure that it is a "Keeper's Gun Improved" as it is stamped on the barrel, an unengraved workaday gun possibly used by the gamekeeper of an English estate in the late 1880s. If ever there was a shotgun perfectly designed for dove hunting, it's this one.

I had never fired the gun before, but downed seven consecutive doves, one of them just beyond 40 yards. I missed a few then, and stopped to study an immature harrier that landed in the walnut tree. Harriers are slim hawks with roundish, owl-like facial discs. A sure field mark on this hawk is a large white rump patch. I could tell this was an immature by the dark copper feathers of its breast.



I thought then, how in both color and form, the shotgun and the hawk were alike, perfect hunters each, so at home in the fields.

FIELD NOTES



Thought it was a Telemarketer

New deputy Craig Cook was helping fellow officers corner and tranquilize a nuisance bear in Lebanon County, so it could be relocated to a more remote area, when his cell phone fell out of his pocket and into a groundhog hole. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach it (Deputy Cook even tried to dig it out), the officers got another cell phone and called Deputy Cook's phone to determine how far down the hole it was. They could hear it ringing, but it was a long way down the hole and Mr. Hog wasn't answering. Someone mentioned that the groundhog should get an answering machine.

— Deputy Bob Schmitt, Harrisburg

Cooperative Effort

The Warren County Food and Cover crew put in six acres of food plots on the grounds of the Tidioute Bucktails Sportsmen's Club. The club provided the seed, fertilizer, lime and fuel for the tractors, and the crew provided the labor. Six acres have been improved for wildlife on land owned by a local sportsmen's group and signed up in the Game Commission's public access program.

— LMO Richard T. Cramer, Tionesta

Didn't Lose the Skills

Chester — I was at the Harrisburg headquarters and had just finished visiting with one of our training officers who then had to leave. A few minutes later, though, he came back and asked for the snare pole in my truck. Puzzled, I went out and got it for him. He went over to his personal pickup and, after squeezing partway through the back sliding window, used the snare pole to "snare" his keys that he had locked in the truck. I guess you can take a warden out of the field, but you can't take away the adaptive mindset that we all get, right, Tim?

— WCO Scott Frederick, Sadsburyville

Hands On Experience

McKean — In March Deputy Dale Thielges and I had several beaver sets on Portage Creek south of Port Allegany. After several unsuccessful days, and with the water rising, we decided to pull our traps. With very high water, I crawled over a bank and balanced myself on a tree over the stream to pull a conibear set near a hole. I had one hand on the tree and the other on a support stick holding the trap when I noticed a large dark shape swim right into the trap I was holding. I heard the trap slam shut and was nearly pulled into the water by a 40-pound beaver until it expired.

— WCO Thomas M. Sabolcik, Port Allegany

Becoming More Tolerant?

York — We've had a banner year for eagle nests in my district, and several sites thought to be abandoned had nesting pairs. Several visitors to the area and I witnessed two mature eagles devour a carp, which is notable because the area had been abandoned for several years by eagles due to high human disturbance of the nesting site.

— WCO Chad R. Eyler, York

Realistic Work

SULLIVAN — Local taxidermist Nancy Craft placed a full bear mount outside of her studio, getting ready to have it transported to its owner. When she went back inside, a deer came by and tried to eat the plastic vegetation at the base of the mount.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Priorities

FOREST — WCO Mario Piccirilli and I presented a HTE course for the East Forest 5th and 6th grade. Later, I was approached by one student's mother who said her son expressed his excitement that he had two whole days at school doing nothing but talking about hunting and trapping. What a rewarding thought knowing this youngster will be putting down his play station controls when he's 12 and participating in our hunting heritage.

— DEPUTY LAWRENCE HERGENROEDER, MARIENVILLE

Ripple Effect

LANCASTER — Due to budget constraints it was decided to curtail many of the complimentary subscriptions to *Game News*, including public school libraries, which is a shame because teachers have reported that *Game News* is the only publication many students want to read. I would like to commend the Paradise Sportsmen's Club for stepping up and buying subscriptions for all the schools in the Peguea Valley School District. That message filtered down to the Solanco Farmers Sportsmen's Association, and they will be paying for subscriptions for the schools in the Solanco School District. I spread the message of these two sportsmen's groups at a recent county federation meeting and others approached me about what they could do in their local areas. The sportsmen and women of this state consistently come to bat for wildlife conservation and our hunting heritage. I know for certain that when my son's class goes to the library, *Game News* is one busy little magazine.

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

Banner Season?

MONROE — One evening recently I counted 112 deer in a 4-mile stretch of road near Long Pond, and then a few weeks later spotted two large bucks and many other deer on SGL 127.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Shortchange?

I took my 9-year-old son Kyle with me during gobbler season and was pointing out the differences in hen and gobbler sign when we came across some tracks. I explained to him that any track longer than 4½ inches, from back of the heel pad to the tip of the middle toe, was probably made by a gobbler. I asked him if he did not have a ruler to measure a track, what might he use from his wallet that would be a little more than six inches to measure a track. Lost for an answer, I told him a dollar bill would suffice. He responded, "If you did not have a dollar could you use four quarters?"

— LMO ED ZINDELL, GOULDSBORO

Keep in Mind

SNYDER — At the April Game Commission meeting, WMU 4E was added to the extended bear season units, where bears can be harvested during the first week of the general firearms deer season. With the numerous nuisance bear calls within this area, there should be plenty of opportunity for hunters in this WMU.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE

Hopeful

POTTER — There hasn't been a bumper crop of turkeys or grouse here for several years, but conditions this year seemed more favorable for nesting and brood survival.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT



Trainin' 'Em Right

CENTRE — I was driving through a stretch of Black Moshannon State Park during spring gobbler season when I spotted a longbeard and two jakes along the road. The birds quickly moved off the road and stood near a tree that had a sign posted that read, "No Hunting In This Area Of The Park."

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Best Job in the World

CUMBERLAND — In 15 minutes on SGL 169 I saw 15 turkeys, 8 deer, an osprey, 2 bald eagles and many ducks and geese.

— WCO ERIC R. HORSH, SHIPPENSBURG

Blame it on the Editors

PERRY — After having an article published in *Game News* recently, my former high school librarian, who also used to be an English teacher, advised me that she had read it. She politely pointed out, though, that I had incorrectly used "peaked" instead of "piqued" in a sentence. So I did. Thanks, Mom, I'll try to be more careful the next time.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Playin' Possum

CLARION — I noticed a groundhog dangling from a tree branch, so I stopped to see if it was okay. I clapped my hands and shouted at the animal, but it showed no signs of life. Even after I backed my truck to the tree, dropped my deer rack and tailgate and grabbed my snare pole, the groundhog still didn't move. From the tailgate, I reached high with my snare pole to grab the critter, but when I touched its nose with the snare its eyes opened wide and it came barreling out of the tree. I'm not sure which of us was more surprised.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, CLARION

High Tech

SCHUYLKILL — Recently, on the Internet I was able to locate a company from out of state and get the name and address of one of its workers, who had dumped garbage at a game lands parking lot.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON



The Nose Knows

FOREST — Deputy Lawrence Hergenroeder and I trapped two bears, one 403 pounds and the other 225, within one week behind a local restaurant. The word must be out that the restaurant serves good food, because before raiding the dumpster the bears had been observed sitting in the field behind the restaurant at dusk with their noses in the air to check what was for dinner.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, MARIENVILLE

Oops!

LEHIGH — WCO Matt Teehan and I stopped at the Fogelsville Post Office for his mail, and even though we have learned to park his marked vehicle at the rear of the building, people still approach us with questions and comments. One gentleman asked about obtaining bluebird boxes to complete a project at the Rodale Fitness Park in Trexlertown, but I couldn't give him an answer. I asked for his name, address and phone number, so I could get back to him and gave him my clipboard to write on. When he handed it back I had a hard time deciphering his name. I politely asked him to spell his name and added, "No offense, but with writing like this you should be a doctor." The man replied, "No offense taken, Officer Hartzell, but I am a doctor." Next time I think I'll just drop Matt off at the door and drive around the block until I can pick him up curbside.

— DEPUTY ARCHIE W. HARTZELL, SALISBURY TOWNSHIP

Good and Bad

ERIE — In May I picked up two big roadkilled bucks and have heard several people comment that they had seen some large antlered deer already this year. Let's hope that we keep on seeing them and that I don't have to continue to pick them up.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, ERIE

Topsy-Turvy

FAYETTE — A Mill Run resident told me that he had spotted a large doe running across a road in front of him, obviously being chased, because she was fatigued. He expected to see a coyote chasing her, but was surprised when "the biggest racked buck he'd ever seen" emerged on her trail. Go figure, as this occurred during the first week of April. The buck obviously had his seasons mixed up, and surprisingly still sported antlers. In this same area during deer season we had checked a few mature bucks that had dropped their antlers early and were harvested as antlerless deer.

— WCO CHARLES H. MAY, MILL RUN



Old-Timer

MIFFLIN — I took a nuisance bear that I had captured to a HTE class to show the students how we process and tag bears. The bear wore a tag so I called on my radio to get the history. It seems the female had been previously caught in Lycoming County in 1993, and at that time she was four years old. It dawned on me that the old girl was older than most of the students in the class.

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Doesn't Pay

I cited three hunters during spring gobbler season who were not wearing their fluorescent orange caps while moving. The hunters were surprised to run into an officer so far off the beaten path. We certainly can't be everywhere but we sure are somewhere.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Almost Made It

WESTMORELAND — In the training school we were instructed to use paper clips on all our multiple-page reports. After being assigned to Southwest Region, we were instructed to staple multiple-page reports and were issued a stapler and a box of staples. Well, here it is nearly 20 years later and I just ran out of staples. Nancy, I'll need about a 4-year supply; just a few sleeves from a full box. I'll fill out a green slip; I promise.

— WCO RODNEY ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

A Bird in Hand . . .

WESTMORELAND — Mike Gardner from Latrobe bagged a 22-pound turkey with a 9-inch beard during the gobbler season. After tagging his bird, he moved it to a more scenic spot to take photos, but in between snapshots the turkey got up and ran away. Mike, the Game Commission already has several tag and release programs without you trying to add another one. By the way, he did finally retrieve his prize.

— DEPUTY STEPHEN SARRACINO, GREENSBURG



Hard to Write While Running

VENANGO — Deputy Ryan Ruditis was quietly waiting on a turkey hunter he heard walking out of the woods, to make sure he was wearing his fluorescent orange hat, but the "hunter" turned out to be a bear. Although the bear was not wearing the required orange hat, Deputy Ruditis decided that a verbal warning was sufficient.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, FRANKLIN

Show Off

GREENE — I was watching a group of turkey vultures soaring one breezy day when I noticed something unusual about one of the birds. Grabbing my binoculars, I noticed that the bird that was the highest in the sky was actually a great blue heron. The heron seemed to be enjoying maintaining the highest position in the group until they all soared out of sight.

— WCO ROD BURNS, ROGERSVILLE

Bushwacked

INDIANA — During gobbler season my nephew, Ryan, told me that one morning a coyote came running to his calls. Both were surprised and ran in opposite directions. A couple days later I was telling friend, Zack Ware, about that incident, when he mentioned that a jake earlier that morning had spotted his decoy and was approaching up a gas line when a coyote jumped out of the brush and snatched the turkey.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Dangerous Stakeout

ALLEGHENY — During spring gobbler season I came upon a baited area. After staking out the area, concealed in the brush, I noticed a female cardinal buzzing me and becoming extremely vocal. Sensing something wasn't right, I spotted her nest a foot above my head. After I moved about 10 feet away, she had her nest back and I was still able to nab the violator.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Birdwatchers' Paradise

TIOGA — There are three known active eagle nests in the county this year, with two located near populated areas and busy roadways. These nests have each successfully hatched at least two young.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

One Out of Two . . .

FAYETTE — Ken Ruse of Jumonville called about a bear hitting his birdfeeders, and within a few days we trapped and relocated a 270-pound bruin. While talking to Ken he mentioned that his trick to keep deer away from his shrubbery is a simple and inexpensive solution of milk and water mixed in a sprayer and applied to the plants. He claims this cheap "deer deterrent" is highly effective and has watched deer turn up their nose at the sour milk smell on the leaves. Now, if Ken could only figure out a way to keep the bears at bay.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, UNIONTOWN

2004-05 bobcat harvest: 196

FURTAKERS harvested 196 bobcats (124 females, 70 males and two unidentified) during the 2004-05 bobcat seasons. During the 2003-04 seasons, 140 bobcats were taken; 135 in 2002-03; 146 in 2001-02; and 58 in 2000-01.

At a public drawing last September, the Game Commission awarded 615 permits from more than 4,200 applicants. The agency awarded 570 permits in 2003-04; 545 in 2002-03; 520 in 2001-02; and 290 in 2000-01.

The area open to bobcat hunting and trapping changed slightly with the adoption of wildlife management units in 2003. During this past season, bobcat harvests were allowed in eight WMUs: 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, in southwest, northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania.

2004-05 county harvests were: Bedford, 1; Bradford, 22; Cameron, 7; Centre, 3; Clarion, 1; Clearfield, 12; Clinton, 8; Columbia, 2; Elk, 12; Fayette, 2; Forest, 3; Indiana, 1; Jefferson, 3; Lackawanna, 1; Lehigh, 1; Luzerne, 4; Lycoming, 23; McKean, 6; Monroe, 2; Pike, 5; Potter, 25; Somerset, 2; Sullivan, 20; Susquehanna, 3; Tioga, 19; Wayne, 3; Westmoreland, 1; and Wyoming, 4. (County was not identified for two bobcats.)

"This harvest demonstrates that Pennsylvania has a thriving population of bobcats, and that our hunting and trapping seasons are not impacting the population," said PGC furbearer biologist Dr. Matthew Lovallo.



AL IMBODY from Boyertown trapped this 36-pound male in Potter County. The cat was caught in a dirthole set, with a stepping stick, and it was 34 inches long and 22 inches around.

"Weather conditions were favorable during January and February, particularly for trapping, because of limited precipitation. In fact, 42 percent of the harvest occurred after January 1. Trapping accounted for 87 percent of the bobcat harvest; three percent were taken by hunters using trained hounds; six percent were taken by hunters using predator calls; and four percent were taken by other lawful methods."

Elk License Applications

Mail-in applications must be received in the Game Commission's post office box by August 29.

Online applicatons must be submitted by September 19.

See page 104 of the 2005-06 Digest for complete application instructions.

"Adding WMU 2C to the harvest area provided greater access and opportunities for hunters and trappers who reside in southern counties. An analysis of hunter/trapper surveys during previous seasons showed that permit holders who reside in or near the WMUs open to bobcat hunting and trapping are more successful.

"The addition of WMU 2C and 2E resulted in 15 bobcats being taken, and did not result in a dramatic increase in the number of permits allocated by the Game Commission," Lovallo said.

The Game Commission began accepting applications for 2005-06 bobcat permits on July 1. Mail-in applications are included in the 2005-06 Digest, and must be postmarked no later than Aug. 15. Online applications will be accepted until midnight, September 6.

For 2005-06, 615 licenses will be awarded, at a public drawing at the PGC's Harrisburg headquarters on Friday, September 9, at 10 a.m.

Following the creation of a preference point system in 2003, individuals who applied for a bobcat permit in 2003 and last year but were not selected will have their names entered into the drawing three times if they apply this year as well. However, only one application per person per year will be accepted; multiple submissions will result in the applicant being ineligible for the drawing.

Those who received one of the 615 bobcat permits issued during the 2004-05 season are not eligible for this year's drawing.

The hunting season for bobcats is set for Oct. 15 through Feb. 18, and the trapping season is set for Oct. 16 through Feb. 18. Those hunters or trappers receiving one of the limited permits through a public drawing will be allowed to pursue bobcats in WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D, in southwest, northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania.

Important wildlife projects approved

THE BOARD of Commissioners recently approved two bat research projects through the federal State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program, and a wetlands preservation project through the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP).

Specifically, the projects are:

"Examination of Bat Mortality at Penobscot Mountain Wind Farm." This $153,000 project, submitted by East Stroudsburg University, will investigate the effects the Penobscot Mountain Wind Farm will have on

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

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bats. Researchers will monitor bats and birds at the Luzerne County site, before and after the 36-turbine wind farm is constructed.

"Small-Footed Bat Telemetry at Lake Raystown." This $18,000 project, submitted by Sanders Environmental Inc., will evaluate the foraging and roosting habitat needs of small-footed bats, in hopes of ultimately keeping the threatened species from becoming endangered.

The $175,000 LIP wetland project, submitted by the Berks County Conservancy, will protect critical wetland habitats. LIP requires a 50 percent funding match, which will be met by the Berks County Conservancy, the landowner and other interested parties.

"It's always gratifying to see local organizations and individuals get involved financially with important conservation projects such as the Muhlenberg Wetlands Project," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "Wetlands are so important to so many wildlife species but, unfortunately, too many have been lost to development. Every acre we save is vitally important to wildlife and the environment."

Antlerless License Application Schedule

August 1, applications accepted from residents.

August 15, applications accepted from nonresidents.

August 22, first round of unsold antlerless licenses, applications accepted from residents and nonresidents.

September 12, second round of unsold antlerless licenses, applications accepted from residents and nonresidents.

Be Sure to use the yellow envelopes when applying.

SWG is a cost-sharing program administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Aid Program. LIP was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assist private landowners interested in working to conserve and restore the habitat of endangered species and other plants and animals at arisk.

For more on these programs visit www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "Wildlife," then choose "State Wildlife Grants Program" under the "Wildlife Reference Guides" category.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

Reminder

Due to cost-cutting measures, effective July 1, 2005, toll-free numbers for Game Commission region offices were disconnected.

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Second breeding bird atlas survey documents important changes



PENNSYLVANIA'S second Breeding Bird Atlas Survey started last spring and will continue through summer 2008, but important findings are already coming in.

Since work started on this second Atlas more than 70,000 bird sightings — 189 species — have been logged on the Atlas website (www.carnegiemnh.org/atlas/home.htm) and more than 165 species have already been confirmed nesting here. In the first Atlas, 210 species were observed and 180 were confirmed to be nesting at the end of the 6-year project.

Two species that weren't recorded in the 1980s are the Sandhill crane and the Eurasian collared dove. Atlas workers also have reported some 30 'species of special concern,' including least bittern, sedge wren, black tern, Swainson's thrush, dickcissel, yellow-bellied flycatcher, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, osprey and black-crowned night heron. Other rare and unusual species observed include the clay-colored sparrow, chuck-will's-widow, ruddy duck, ring-necked duck and bufflehead.

The second Atlas includes a new, specialized owl and whip-poor-will survey component. Experienced volunteer birders are using a recorded saw-whet owl call to help locate this secretive species. Saw-whets are one of the hardest birds to find, but they're very responsive to calls.

"We know more about saw-whets now than we did 10 years ago, because of an innovative survey technique called a 'toot route' that was used by the Game Commission in 2000 and 2001 to locate saw-whets," noted PGC biologist Dan Brauning. "Now we're using the technique statewide in hopes of developing a more definitive understanding of the saw-whet's distribution and abundance."

Wetland birds — such as Virginia and sora rails, least and American bitterns, and marsh wrens — also will receive special attention, because they are secretive and, therefore, often overlooked. Monitoring them is particularly important, though, because they comprise an inordinately high percentage of Pennsylvania's endangered and threatened species.

Although more than 1,400 volunteers are already participating in this second survey, coordinators are still looking for volunteers, especially in rural areas, to help record information about the myriad species that nest in the commonwealth's forests, fields and wetlands.

"This is history in the making," noted Brauning. "It's a chance for everyone who cares about bird conservation to help make a difference for

Interested in volunteering? Visit www.pabirdatlas.org, or call Atlas project coordinators at 724-593-6022.

songbirds, and to be involved in the most ambitious and important nesting bird survey ever undertaken in Pennsylvania.

Participants sign up to search for or report on nesting birds in specific 10-square mile geographic grids. Every individual who signs up to help with the survey can choose his or her level of involvement. Whether a birder provides one or 100 entries, every record adds measurably to the Atlas' ambitious goals. For more information, visit the Game Commission's website, and click on the Breeding Bird Atlas Survey logo on the right hand side of the PGC homepage.

PGC photographer Joe Osman retires

PGC photographer Joe Osman retired this past June, capping a career that spanned 37 years. Over the course of his career, Osman documented a third of the Game Commission's entire history on film, movies and video. In addition to providing countless photographs for *Game News*, he did much more.



JOE OSMAN, right, receives from PGC Press Secretary Jerry Feaser a small token of appreciation from his co-workers during a retirement gathering.

From the dark room to the computer station, Osman was always on the cutting edge of technology. He played a key role in producing audio-visual materials for the agency's hunter education program, beginning in 1969, when hunter education became mandatory here. He also was instrumental in the production of the Game Commission's award winning movies and videos, and in bringing the agency into the computer age and especially the use of digital photography.

Considering that Joe's father, James Osman, was a member of the first class to attend the agency's Ross Leffler School of Conservation, in 1936, Joe Osman and his father have left a long and lasting legacy in Pennsylvania's wildlife conservation history.

Middle Creek programs/art show

August 5, 6 & 7, Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show

This, the 20th Annual Wildlife Art Show, will showcase 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. Take advantage of this opportunity to see and purchase some beautiful wildlife art, and meet the artists who create it. Show days and times are: Friday, Aug. 5, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, Aug. 6, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, Aug. 7, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

August 24, "Owls of Pennsylvania"

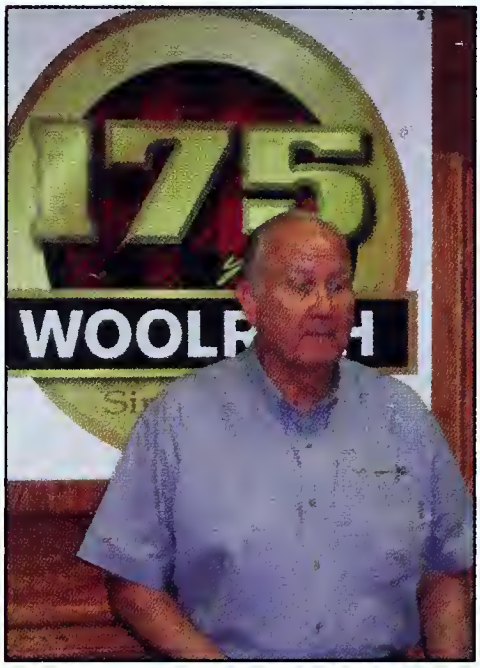
Eight species of owls inhabit Pennsylvania at least some part of the year. Come hear more about this fascinating group of birds from PGC Environmental Education Specialist Bert Myers.

Woolrich celebrates 175th

WOOLRICH is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year. Started in 1830 and still largely based in the rural mountains of northcentral Pennsylvania, the company began by supplying wool, yarn and other items for the wives of lumbermen and farmers to use for making clothes. Over the years since, the company has kept pace with the outdoor clothing needs, going on to manufacture and market a wide variety of top quality outdoor clothing today.

While hunters have been familiar with the company's red and black plaid "Pennsylvania Tuxedo" for decades, Woolrich has grown from supplying clothing for lumbermen, miners and railroad workers, to providing hunters, hikers, fishermen, skiers, photographers and all other outdoor recreational pursuits with functional and attractive clothing.

Bob Mitchell



What may not be as widely known, from the Civil War right up to this day, Woolrich has also been supplying blankets and other items to American soldiers.

During his keynote address at 175th Anniversary ceremonies held in Woolrich this past June, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, an avid outdoorsman and conservationist, talked about leadership, a subject he readily admitted that all those affiliated with Woolrich, for going on two centuries now, obviously know a great deal about.

PGC Elk Hunter knife still available



A limited number of the Game Commission's "Elk Hunter" knives are still available. The fifth and last knife in the PGC's first collectible series, the "Elk Hunter" is available only online, through the agency's "The Outdoor Shop," at www.pgc.state.pa.us. The collector knives are individually numbered and cost $89.95, plus shipping, handling and, if applicable, state sales tax. Also, buyers of this knife will be notified immediately when the first knife in the next PGC series becomes available.

SGL 53 bridge dedication

VISITORS to SGL 53, in Fulton County, now have a much easier way to get around the lake, thanks to a dedicated group of sportsmen and sportswomen from Adams County.



Bob Mitchell

Chris Cool, Ken Kime and Ron Herring, left to right, pictured above during a dedication ceremony held this past June, were instrumental in having a new bridge built across the creek just below the dam at the Meadow Grounds Lake.

The bridge was built in memory of their friend Len Miller, who died while hunting on the game lands. When he was found, Len had five squirrels in his game bag, evidently passing away while waiting for that sixth squirrel to fill his bag limit.

Built largely of Spanish red cedar, the bridge is designed to withstand the elements for decades, and will no doubt be particularly appreciated by anybody who has to get a deer from one side of the 200-acre lake to the parking areas on the other.

More than two dozen people volunteered to help with the bridge construction project, and according to PGC land managment officer Dave Koppenhaver, he has never worked with a finer group.

THANKS to EMMCO West, Inc. the Northwest Region has an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) for use in administering care in the event of a cardiac emergency. Pictured, left to right, are CHUCK WORLEY, PGC Dispatcher/Lead First Aid, CPR Instructor; CHRISTOPHER J. HEILE, Assistant Director EMMCO West, Inc.; and KEVIN THOMPSON, Northwest Region Federal Aid Supervisor.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

New York

Hunters harvested slightly more than 208,000 deer in 2004, including almost 89,000 antlered deer and approximately 120,000 antlerless deer. The 2004 harvest is down 18 percent from the 253,000 deer taken in 2003. The recent declines in the harvest were a result of weather, hunting conditions and specific management actions intended to reduce deer populations from the high levels of 2002 and 2003 and bring populations closer to manageable levels in the many areas where deer were overabundant. Steuben County had the highest deer kill in 2004 with 11,571. Rounding out the top five counties: Cattaraugus, 10,658; Allegany, 10,587; St. Lawrence 7,476; and Chautauqua, 7,430. In addition, with only 18 individuals injured in deer hunting shooting mishaps, 2004 set a record for the fewest ever.

Ohio

Hunters recorded a record harvest in 2004-05, taking 217,301 deer. There were 125,681 deer taken during the 1-week regular gun season; 27,749 killed during the 4-day muzzleloader season; and 57,198 during the archery season. An additional 6,673 deer were taken by youngsters during the 2-day special youth hunt.

Nebraska

In 2004 114,925 permit holders killed 56,311 deer, nearly 3,000 more than in 2003. General firearm hunter success was 56 percent, with 83,938 hunters taking 47,374 deer. Archers took 4,219 deer on 14,447 permits and 16,540 muzzleloaders harvested 4,718 deer.

California

A bill was introduced that would require manufacturers to put serial numbers on every piece of handgun ammunition sold in the state. Each box of cartridges would have its own serial number, and every bullet and casing in the box would be engraved with that number. The added cost would be passed on to consumers. The bill passed the Senate Committee on Public Safety and awaits action with the Senate Finance Committee.

Georgia

Wildlife specialists at Fort Benning trapped and sent 16 endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers to national parks in Florida, Alabama and Mississippi last fall to boost populations throughout the southeastern U.S. A breeding pair of red-cockaded woodpeckers usually produces only two offspring per year, making it difficult to increase the population. In addition, the birds require open forest with mature longleaf pines to make cavities for roosting and nesting. Today, there are less than 300 million acres of longleaf pine forests, three percent of the acreage present at the onset of European colonization.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Many hunters fish, too, because the activities have some similarities, maybe even more than you'd imagine.

Fishing for Deer

DEFINING WHAT INTERESTS a person in deer hunting is a slippery undertaking. Holding onto this "eel" of an idea is difficult. Deer hunting has so many intriguing facets. Is it the lure of big antlers, the promise of tasty steaks, the challenge of a well-placed shot, the satisfaction of a task completed, or is it the serendipity of being in the right place at the right time, when the hunter's fate and the deer's converge?

During quiet moments in the woods, I've rummaged in the tackle closet of my head, trying to find what attracts me most about deer hunting. And I think I've found the answer: fishing.

I like to "fish" for deer. Let me explain. I'm not talking about using towing-strength monofilament and an ultra-heavy casting rod, with a really long reach, but about an angling mindset in a woods application.

What interests me about fishing, I had decided during quiet moments on the stream, is "hunting" for fish, especially trout. Hunting techniques for trout; fishing techniques for deer. A similar theme runs through the activities. I like to go onto the stream or into the forest and interpret the habitat, the living space, of the trout or the deer. I like to figure out where they are likely to be at that time, and then go after them.

How I go after them will be different from sport to sport, of course. With the trout that might be wading in and evaluating the water flow and depth, and in locating places where the current bends around rocks or underwater timber or has carved deep runs. All of these are good hiding and resting spots for trout, from

Bob Steiner



AN ANGLER casts for trout, "hunting" the fish with his fly. In season, put a rifle in his hands, get him out of the water, and he can use his "fishing" techniques to get a deer.

which they can dart out for food or wait for it to drift to them. Having "read the stream," I flick my rod and cast my bait or fly precisely, and I think positively.

In deer hunting, I walk into the forest and similarly evaluate what I see. How does this landscape relate to being a good or poor place to encounter deer? Are there thickets they can hide and rest in? Are there bumps or depressions in the terrain that bend scent-carrying air currents that tell them whether they should bed or feed here? Having "read the land," I unshoulder my rifle and ease farther into the woods, flicking my eyes right and left and thinking positively.



Bob Steiner

A HEALTHY STREAM has better fish; a healthy forest habitat has better deer. Anglers and hunters both know this and use it in their sports and in their involvement in conservation organizations and in supporting and paying for wildlife conservation and habitat protection and enhancement.

The ultimate question that faces me on a trout stream or in the deer woods is, "Where's the trout/deer, and can I get it out?" I must be a sufficiently skillful angler or hunter, and have the blessing of occasional luck, to make this happen. I have to know where under that moving, undulating, tricky cover of the water surface the fish are likely to be. And I have to know where in that usually motionless (but moving, too, if the wind blows) forest scene, within its uncertain shapes and shadows, a deer might be. I have to have the right tools at hand, whether a rod and lures or flies, or a rifle, blackpowder gun or bow, to get the job done. And I must either be patient in waiting for the fish or the deer or actively pursue it, as the situation requires or as I want my sport to be for that day.

I'm not much of a long-term "bank fisherman" for deer. I know others who are and it works for them, and that's fine. It's not my sort of "deer-fishing," and I don't do it often. I don't have a built treestand or blind, although I have used portable treestands for bowhunting. I have sat for hours on a log or rock or on the ground, as an impromptu stand, and I don't like that either. I keep wondering what's on the other side of the hill or farther into the woods that might be better. This is the same yearning I feel on a stream, knowing there's something waiting around the next bend, waiting to be explored.

Prolonged bouts of sitting or standing use up my allotment of patience quickly. Staring into the unchanging woods, from which deer have so far been absent, is little different, to me, than staring at the water surface. Although the light may shimmer in a new way from moment to moment, from leaves or waves, the scene is largely unchanging. I'd rather go abroad and make something happen.

That's why I like putting on my boots, the fishing ones with felt soles or the hunting pair with lugged soles, and fishing or hunting more aggressively — "proactively" they say today. I would rather try for a trout in the pocket water behind that rock and

then wade upstream, placing my cast behind the next boulder or alongside the next log, finding out what's ever-farther upstream, than plop a bobber into a deep pool and wait. I'd rather still-hunt cautiously along a mountain bench, pausing against a tree or dropping to one knee from time to time to scan the scene, looking for the telltale line of a deer's back or the white inside curve of a leg, than plop down for the day in one spot, no matter how hot that spot might be.

That's just me. You may prefer a different recreation style. I know anglers who spend whole nights on the banks of big rivers, sitting on the same rock but catching big catfish. And others who like to motor across a lake, passing other likely bassholds, to anchor and cast in a favorite cove. And that's okay, too. But put me on a trout stream, when the flies are popping and the trout are, too, and I'm content.

Many deer hunters swear by their permanent treestands, and take deer from them year after year. They wouldn't miss opening day in their blind for anything. They talk to me about how nice it was to be cozy in there, and how they just had to raise the window (the window!) when the buck appeared. Or how they hiked or took their ATV, where allowed, far into the forest before daybreak and sat on "their" stump until quitting time. Put me out of the car right here, thank you; as soon as I step into the woods, I'm hunting.

Stream quality determines what sort of fishing I'll have, from whether anything much is in there to be fished for, to how big the big one that got away really was. I know trout best, and they must have clean, cold, oxygen-rich water. The stream has to be healthy enough to supply food, those caddis, stoneflies, mayflies, crayfish and minnows that trout relish. Those of us who enjoy trout have to work to keep streams that way, through our involvement in conservation organizations and in supporting, even paying for, waterway conservation, protection and enhancement.

Habitat quality similarly determines what sort of deer hunting I'll have, from whether there is anything much there to be hunted, to how big the big antlered one that got away really was. I know that deer need more than big trees, even if they do produce acorns and beechnuts, and must also have lower level browse, like leafy brush, tender saplings and seedlings, and ground forage in openings. Those of us who enjoy deer have to work to keep the forest healthy, through our involvement in conservation organizations and in supporting and paying for wildlife conservation and habitat protection and enhancement.

I stand along the stream and watch for the tattletale ring of a rise; I pause in the forest and watch for the telltale flick of a white tail. I cast my hopes for the day upon the trout water and upon the hours spent in the deer woods. Although I may still be seeking one kind of happiness, I know I have already netted another. □

Cover Painting by Marie Girio Brummett

THE GERMAN WIREHAIRED POINTER, also known as the Deutsch drahthaar, is one gun dog breed that you won't often see working in the uplands of Pennsylvania. Similar in size, perhaps slightly smaller, than a German shorthair, this pointer has a course, wiry coat, docked tail and distinctive whiskered face. Acceptable colors are liver or liver with white spots. The breed has a keen nose and is a good retriever, which, in addition to its coat repelling water well, makes it a suitable breed for waterfowl. Inquiries about the artwork for this month's cover or availability of prints can be made to the artist at P.O. Box 111, Landisburg, PA 17040. Check out Marie's website at www.brummett.net.

From bats in the house to bats in the "belfry" at Canoe Creek State Park, it's shaping up to be . . .

Another Batty August

ON A WARM AUGUST evening, my husband Bruce and I were sitting in our living room, reading. Suddenly, we were not alone. A bat, flying close to our heads, circled the room.

Bruce called our son Dave up from the guesthouse to help shepherd the bat outside through the open front door, but it wouldn't shepherd. Round and round the bat went as they tried to guide it out with jackets used like matador capes. Always, it missed the open door because it flew too close to the ceiling.

Several times the bat landed on top of our books in the bookcase and peered down at us. By then, I had gotten my binoculars, which gave me a close-up look at its little face. Its expression reminded me of a naughty child hiding from its parents.

After 15 minutes of watching the men in fruitless pursuit of the bat, I searched around for something else to persuade it to leave. I handed my old mop to Bruce, who held it near the ceiling above the open door. The next time the bat circled toward





Lori Richardson Photos

ENDANGERED INDIANA bats are now using the "Bat Condo," as well as the church at Canoe Creek State Park, as a maternity roost.

that corner of the room, Bruce wiggled the mop slightly. That caused the bat to swoop lower, sense the open door, and swoop out into the night. Bruce quickly closed the screen door, and as we looked outside we could see the bat circling our front porch, no doubt already in pursuit of the mosquitoes that had driven us inside earlier in the evening.

It seems as if every August a bat finds its way into our old farmhouse. Last August's visitor was a little brown bat or myotis, one of Pennsylvania's most common bats. Probably it was a youngster or "pup" that was exploring the nooks and crannies of our house in search of a roosting place.

Our batty August continued when our granddaughter Eva arrived for a short visit. She and I and her mother Luz, planned to attend Canoe Creek State Park's Third Annual Bat Festival. The brainchild of Heidi Boyle, the energetic environmental educator for the park, the free festival highlights bats in a series of family-oriented programs ranging from bat games for kids and information about bat caves, to meeting live bats and watching the evening emergence of a bat maternity colony. That colony, incidentally, is the largest known maternity colony of little brown bats east of the Mississippi River.

It had been 15 years since I had attended a bat program at the park. Then Roy Boyle was park naturalist and park superintendent Terry Wentz, now retired, were part of a crew that climbed to the second floor of a nearby old country church to get some idea of the bat population there, which nearby residents told them had been present for many summers. At that time, they estimated the maternity colony held 5,600 little brown bat mothers and pups.

Since then Canoe Creek State Park, the church, which the park later bought, and the nearby gated Hartman Limestone Mine that protects thousands of hibernating bats in the winter, have become world famous for their bats and bat research. (See August 1996 column.)

Back in 1988, though, Roy Boyle and Game Commission wildlife biologist Cal Butchkoski, otherwise known as the "Batman of Pennsylvania," initiated the first bat program at the park. Rumors of their fabulous program had reached me, and I spent an evening watching Butchkoski and Boyle convert 125 bat-haters into bat-lovers within the hour.

While the kids were willing, their parents were not. "I hate those things," one woman confided loudly to another before the program began.

And when Butchkoski started the program by asking, "What comes to mind when I say bat?," two women yelled, "Kill!"

Remembering that, I was amazed when we arrived at the bat festival. More than 600 men, women and children had come from as far away as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to this park outside Altoona. Many were bat enthusiasts eager to learn more about their favorite critters. While I attended the kid-friendly programs with Eva, my daughter-in-law, who knew nothing about bats, went to the adult-oriented programs.

Eva and I crammed ourselves into the standing-room-only crowd at the park's education center to learn about caves from Ann Molosky of nearby Lincoln Caverns and to build a model of a bat cave out of a Big Mac container. The enthusiasm was high and remained so at the next activity — bat games for kids.

In the meantime, Luz joined a group that learned how Game Commission scientists use telemetry to track bats for research. She followed that up by attending a program on the Indiana bat by Cal Butchkoski. Butchkoski's great discovery, since my last visit, had been that the endangered Indiana bats, which are known to hibernate in the Hartman Limestone Mine, were using the "Bat Condo" he had erected near the church, as well as bat boxes and the church itself as maternity roosts.

For information about the upcoming Fourth Bat Festival, check Canoe Creek State Park's online Calendar of Events at **www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/canoecreek.aspx** or call the park at 814-695-6807.

"Up until that point in time, Indiana bats had never been documented using a manmade structure as a maternity roost," said Jerry Hassinger, Wildlife Diversity supervisor for the PGC's Bureau of Wildlife Management until his recent retirement.

Typically, Indiana bat summer maternity roosts are found in tree cavities or under loose bark. Using telemetry on the Indiana bats they found in the church, Butchkoski and Hassinger discovered that those same bats also used trees as alternate or secondary roosts even though they gave birth and raised their young in the manmade structures. Further research revealed that Indiana bats foraged mainly in a nearby large block of mature lowland forest, habitat that is harder and harder to find because it is popular for development.

Bat Festival attendees had the chance to visit the Bat Condo, church and Hartman Mine, all of which remain important components in the PGC's bat research. But the most popular program at the festival occurred near dusk.

Hundreds of people made their way to the church and settled themselves in the old graveyard to watch the nightly emergence of the bats. While naturalist Stan Kotala told us about the bat maternity colony, Cal Butchkoski showed us what was happening inside the church. Previously he had set up infrared cameras with infrared lighting in the church attic that sent a signal to a receiver outside the church. He then plugged the receiver into a video projector that produced the images on a screen, and we could see bats flying about inside the attic before emerging into the night.

Finally, though, as daylight faded, first a few bats flew outside through a second story back window, then more and more — a river of bats that fluttered off to "act as an all-natural pesticide," in the words of Michael Gannon, an associate professor of biology at Penn State Altoona, who also uses the Canoe Creek bats in his research on bat calls. Gannon says that, "A single little brown bat can catch 300 to 3,000 insects per night, and a nursing mother little brown bat eats half her body weight or more each night." No wonder the farmers living near the park use less pesticides than farmers in the rest of the state.

Eva was enthralled at the emergence, as were the other children in the audience, but they were probably unaware that they were witnessing a once common natural phenomenon few people today have the privilege of seeing.

Bat numbers are dwindling for many reasons. Most people still think "kill" when they see one. In addition to human persecution and habitat destruction, bats, in our part of the Appalachians, face still another hazard — wind turbine farms. Developed as an environmentally-friendly alternative to conventional power plants, the graceful, white turbines rise more than 340 feet above the ground at both the Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, and Backbone Mountain, West Virginia, wind farms.

Already castigated for causing too many bird deaths, the discovery of thousands of dead bats at those facilities was an unexpected shock. But bat conservationists have swung into action in an effort to discover why bats are dying and what can be done to prevent their deaths. A collaborative research initiative called the Bats and Wind Energy Cooperative has been developed with Bat Conservation International, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the American Wind Energy Association and the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Last summer they conducted daily searches at both facilities and found that the turbines' ul-

trasonic emissions did not attract bats as previously suspected and that more bats died during nights of low wind speed. At the Meyersdale facility more adult and male bats were killed than juveniles or females. Altogether, at Meyersdale, between July 31 and September 11, searchers found 290 bat bodies of seven species — hoary, eastern red, eastern pipistrelle, silver-haired, big brown, little brown and northern long-eared. In addition, the researchers concluded that bats are dying all year long at the site, not just during migration.

The mystery continues, and so will the research until scientists figure out, as Merlin Tuttle of Bat Conservation International puts it, why wind turbines are "bat veg-o-matics."

Our own batty August ended with Dave's and Eva's bat watching at the guesthouse portico one night as a couple little brown bats swooped around the portico light catching insects.

Then one bat climbed into the crack between the end of the guesthouse roof and the side of the house to groom itself. Training a flashlight on the bat, they watched what Dave said looked like "a big-eared mouse chewing on a tiny umbrella."

As he later wrote in his Via Negativa blog post entitled *Little Brown Myotis*: "Only when he worked on the surface of an open wing did we get a look at his face, dimly visible through the thin membrane of skin . . . He spent most of his time on the wings, with only a few nibbles at his abdomen . . . When the bat finished grooming, he turned his listening face full on us for a few seconds, then, rather than flying out the way he came, scuttled up feet first through a crack in the [roof] tiles and disappeared."

Needless to say, Eva will not forget her batty August and neither will we. □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

Find The Furbearers

Circle the 9 furbearers spelled backwards in the lines below, and then copy the uncircled letters to complete the statement.

L E S A E W P E K N I M X O F D E R N

T A R K S U M N S M U S S O P O Y

L T A C B O B V A R E V A E B N

N O O C C A R I A K N U K S

All these furbearers are found in _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

answers on p. 63

By John Kasun

Everyone misses once in a while, but if you're missing more than your share of deer, it might be for reasons other than you think.

Accuracy From Any Position

IF YOU ARE A BOWHUNTER I think it would be safe to bet that you have missed a deer. As a matter of fact, I would guess that you have missed more than one. I know I have. The interesting part is that the average bowhunting shot for a whitetail is taken at approximately 17 yards.

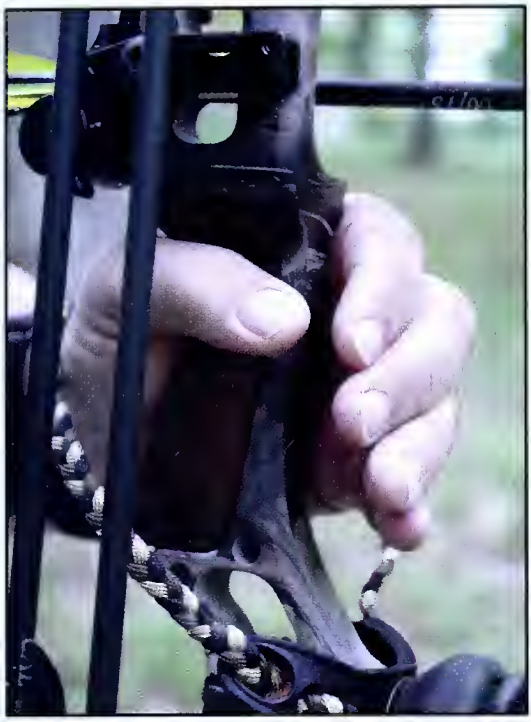
With the quality of today's archery equipment, it's hard to believe that even an average archer could miss a deer at that range, but it happens many times each year, and it happens to archers who have above average shooting skills. The question is why?

First of all there is a definite difference between shooting at a stationary target while standing on level ground in the backyard and shooting at a wily whitetail while twisted halfway around a tree 20 feet off the ground.

A missed shot normally has two components that caused it — excitement and form. While the excitement part of the equation never really goes away, it can be controlled through experience. The "form" part of a miss, however, often gets overlooked. Everyone thinks that their form is just great; just look at their practice targets. They seem to be able to shoot one arrow after another, right in the middle. How, then, can you explain a simple miss? To get the answer to this question and to better understand how to shoot well under all conditions, we must first understand what it takes to shoot a bow not only accurately, but also how to do it every time and while shooting from any position.

Let's look at the relationship between shooting under hunting conditions and in practice. Any good athlete practices for one reason — to make the conscious act of doing something an automatic action that can be performed under pressure without thought. When a professional baseball player swings at a pitch, he does not think about the spacing of his feet, his weight distribution or when or how hard to swing the bat. It happens in the blink of an eye, subconsciously. It is an automatic reflex. Shooting a bow under hunting conditions should happen the same way. If you think about the shot, you're sure to miss, which brings us to the real purpose of practice.

Many archers think that practicing is simply shooting arrows. The more arrows you shoot, the better you should become. Nothing could be further from the truth. Practice is about learning to do the right things automatically, and that means learning, understanding and practicing the right form from the placement of your hand on the bow to your final release. To be repeatedly accurate you must do each step the same every time. If you can do that, every



THE BOW HAND should be relaxed and the fingers should not grip the bow. A relaxed bow hand minimizes torque and allows the bow to react naturally after the shot, resulting in greater accuracy. Use a bow sling to prevent dropping the bow, but make sure the sling fits loosely and allows the bow to move at the shot.

arrow will go in the same place; you won't miss.

Archers tend to be gadget freaks. I can say that because I am one. We obsess about every detail, constantly adjusting and tuning our bows, trying different arrows, broadheads, sights and releases. While having a properly tuned bow is important, it alone does not determine accuracy. Tests using a shooting machine to eliminate human error have been conducted using an out of tune bow. As long as the arrows were matched in spine and weight, the bow shot tight groups regardless of distance. This proves that no matter how the equipment is tuned, if every shot is set up and fired in exactly the same way, the arrows will group well. It is seldom the equipment that causes a miss, but rather the failure of the archer to shoot every arrow exactly the same. Therefore, the most important part of shooting accurately is learning the proper form and duplicating it automatically every shot. The good news is that this is not as hard as you might think. While it would be impossible in this short column to explain in complete detail all of the steps involved in proper shooting form, we can get a pretty good start explaining the basic concepts.

Shooting a bow is not rocket science, so don't make the mistake of making it too complicated. Although there is force involved in drawing the bow, for the ultimate accuracy, your shooting form should be natural. In other words, a bow should be shot in a manner in which the bow and the body work together and don't fight each other. For a simple experiment, stand approximately 20 yards from your target and close your eyes. Draw your bow and come to your anchor. Open your eyes and see where your sight is pointing. Try this several times, and remember, do not make any conscious correction, let the bow point where it feels most comfortable. After you have done this several times, note where the bow is naturally pointing. Chances are it is to the right or left of the target by maybe a foot or more. If you had been shooting at this target it would have been necessary for you to "twist" your body to aim at the target. This action is unnatural and difficult to repeat shot after shot. It makes more sense to change your foot position so that at full draw you are *naturally* pointing at the target. The logic is that it's easier to do what comes naturally than to force your body to do something unnatural.

This "natural logic" applies to each and every step of the shooting process. The grip on the bow should be relaxed. Do not grip the bow, but instead, hold it loosely to prevent bow torque. The hand should be placed on the bow grip in the same position each time using a low wrist. The bones of the bow arm should line up directly behind the wrist, transferring the force to the

shoulder, which should be down and back. Consider for a moment that your job was to simply lean against a wall for eight hours a day using your bow arm and shoulder. If you extended your arm or elevated your wrist you would tire quickly. However putting your weight behind a hand flat against the wall with a low wrist and allowing your shoulder to be supported by your body you could lean there all day. Try leaning against a wall and see how your body feels most natural in supporting the weight. It is the same as when drawing a bow.

The most common mistake that I see time after time is archers shooting bows with draw lengths that are too long. This means the archer must extend his bow arm to compensate for the extra length, and as he tires he will find that his groups open up. I was guilty of that mistake for many years. When I shorted my draw length 1½ inches, not only did my groups improve but I also was able to shoot for much longer periods without tiring.

The bow hand should be relaxed and the bow drawn to a natural anchor point, using the muscles of the back and not the arms. Maintaining proper back tension is critical to accurate shooting. Another quick check to see if your bow is set up to suit your natural body position is to check your string peep. When anchored, center your sight in the string peep and close your eyes for several seconds. When you open your eyes, again note if the sight has moved up or down in the peep. If it has, the peep needs to be relocated to its "natural" position.

Several years ago I noticed that as I grew tired my arrows still grouped, but they were hitting low. Searching for the answer I noticed that the longer I shot the more difficult it was for me to keep my sight pin centered in the string peep. The peep tended to drift upward as my body sought a more comfortable anchor. By not positioning the peep at the correct location I was forcing my body to fight its natural position. Moving the peep sight down solved the problem and tightened my groups.

Now what does all of this mean and what does it have to do with missing a deer? Under the stress of a hunting shot your body will automatically go to what feels natural, and if you learn to shoot that way in practice, you will not have to think about it when a shooting opportunity presents itself when hunting. When practicing we take multiple shots under ideal conditions. When hunting we may get only one shot a season, from an uncomfortable position, when we least expect it, with only seconds to take it. The more you train your body to react naturally, the better your chances are of making that shot count.

The main difference between a practice shot and a hunting shot is the relationship between your feet and your upper body. When practicing you are normally standing on a flat surface with your body in line with the target. Under hunting conditions you may be on an uneven surface or you may



THIS OVERHEAD VIEW shows strong in-line form. The bow arm is firmly behind the bow, transferring the force to the shoulder, and the elbow of the drawing arm is in line with the arrow. This helps transfer the force required to draw the bow to the back muscles, giving the shooter maximum control of the shot.

Here are two books that I read and reread to keep on top of my form.

Idiot Proof Archery by Bernie Pellerite gives a step-by-step description, complete with photographs of the proper shooting form explaining not only what to do but why. Bernie is extremely knowledgeable, and his advice and coaching services are constantly sought by many archery professionals. Bernie can be contacted by e-mail at AskBernie@aol.com. Bernie's books and videos are also shown on his website **www.robinhoodvideos.com.**

A second excellent book is *Core Archery* by Larry Wise, who resides in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania. Larry is a world field archery and national target champion and international coach, as well as a Pennsylvania bowhunter. *Core Archery* is an in-depth discussion of the science of shooting and the role the various parts of the body play in producing repetitive accuracy. *Core Archery* and other books in Larry's archery series can be obtained from Target Communication. Check out their website at **www.deerinfo.com.**

be sitting or kneeling. You may have to twist your body to get the shot. You may be shooting uphill or downhill or any combination of all of the above.

Think of your body as being divided in two sections with the division occurring at your waist. Under hunting conditions when you cannot stand erect and in line with the target, you must twist at the waist, keeping your footing as solid as possible, while maintaining proper shooting form in your upper body. Remember, a bow will shoot where you aim it if you make every shot the same. Most missed hunting shots occur simply because we failed to program our bodies to shoot using proper form in the most natural way possible.

While most bowhunters practice religiously before the season, few practice during the season. To keep your shooting sharp it's a good idea to shoot at least a dozen arrows every day during the season, and especially before you head afield. It keeps you in shape and your body tuned. "Making the first shot count" is also a good practice technique. When you are working around the house and take a break, pick up your bow and fire one shot, paying attention to proper form. Repeat this every chance you get and you will be training your mind as well as your body to make that first shot count.

When practicing, attempt to duplicate some possible hunting positions. If you will be hunting from a ground blind, practice shooting while sitting down, and if you hunt from a tree, try some shots from a treestand. Remember that the shot may not be where you anticipate it will be, so don't hesitate to twist or turn, at the waist, to duplicate what may occur. During the actual hunting season I always carry an extra arrow for a practice shot from my treestand, either right after I get in the stand or when I'm ready to leave. I'd much rather learn of a possible miss before an actual shot presents itself.

Another leading cause of hunting misses is the often overlooked clothing factor. Practicing with a T-shirt in August or September is a lot different than shooting with a heavy jacket on in late October or November. Take the time to practice in your hunting clothes, to make sure your bowstring clears your chest and bow arm. A string that contacts clothing on the shot will cause low left arrows for a right-hander or low right arrows for a lefty. To avoid this contact, use a chest protector, arm guard and elastic bands on your upper arm to keep clothing out of the way of the string.

Shooting accurately from any position is guaranteed if you develop the right shooting form and you use that form regardless of the conditions you encounter in the field. □

Hunters who use in-lines during the early muzzleloader season have a host of options to send their projectile downrange.

Replica Black Powders & Pellets

HUNTERS may use any type of muzzleloading ignition system they want during Pennsylvania's early muzzleloader season. Those who are just entering the sport and haven't experienced the challenge and satisfaction that the primitive flintlock system offers will often take the attitude of "so what's new?" One of the things that's new is replica black powders. Replica powders are compressed pellets and sticks, and they're often prominently displayed in gun stores. (Black powder, on the other hand, is kept in a separate, locked storage area.) The demand for replica powders has risen from in-line rifle and cowboy action shooters. Before you buy any muzzleloading propellant, however, you need to understand first, what your firearm is designed to handle, and then why one works better in some muzzleloaders than others.

Replica black powders are not made of the same chemical mixture as black powder (charcoal, saltpeter and sulfur), but they load the same, shoot with similar ballistics and produce a lot less solid fouling. Hodgdon Powder Company officially in-





THERE ARE NOW many types of replica black powders in powder and pellet forms, including Triple Se7en, Pyrodex pellets, Pyrodex RS, American Pioneer Powder, GOEX Pinnacle and Black Mag 3. GOEX has also introduced a solid stick known as the Pinnacle E-Z load. The replica black powders and pellets and sticks have higher ignition temperatures than black powder, which is why they are better suited for in-lines with the #209 shotgun primer.

troduced Pyrodex, now a household name in muzzleloading, in 1976, at the April NRA Convention in Indianapolis. A cleaner burning alternative to black powder, it captured the imagination of modern muzzleloaders. Loaded in bulk volume, just like BP, it allowed repeated shots without cleaning. But the fouling was chemically different, and had to be cleaned chemically, not with just water.

The most recent advance in replica powder was the introduction of pelletized powders. During the 1996 SHOT Show, Hodgdon Powder Company introduced 50-grain Pyrodex pellets, and these have had an overwhelming impact on the way we shoot muzzleloaders. New technology has definitely changed the face of black powder hunting. Pyrodex still had charcoal, saltpeter and sulfur in its components, but the formulation had changed. Potassium perchlorate and graphite were added, along with a few other trade secrets, but the bottom line was that it shot like black powder, but with less fouling.

While competitors shied away from the new replica powder because its variations (Hodgdon soon addressed that need with its Select match grade powder) in pressure were not as consistent as black powder, hunters loved it. Pyrodex allowed hunters to reload without cleaning, and this is a definite advantage.

Pyrodex is a propellant designed specifically for percussion black powder and cartridge firearms. It's currently available in three grades: Grade P is for all caliber pistols, and for 45-caliber or smaller rifles with roundball projectiles; Grade RS is for all rifles and shotguns; Grade Select is a match grade version of RS, which yields greater consistency and accuracy.

To load Pyrodex you follow the same rules used for loading black powder. Use a volumetric powder measurer, not a scale. If you pour 80 grains of FFg black powder for a particular hunting load, you can pour 80 grains of Pyrodex RS or Select to duplicate about the same ballistics. It's interesting to note that you'll get approximately 30 percent more shots per pound than with black powder. Pyrodex has a higher ignition temperature than black powder. This is the reason why it does not function well as a priming powder for flintlocks. It will work as the main powder charge, though, if five grains of FFFFg black powder are poured down the bore first, followed by the main charge of Pyrodex.

Pyrodex causes far less fouling than black powder, and it's possible to seat repeated loads without cleaning. This is sometimes necessary, as follow-up shots may be required during a hunt. To achieve the best accuracy, though, a fouling patch is recommended. A soapy water solution works well for cleaning between shots, but due to the nature of the fouling, a solvent such as EZ CLEAN is necessary for final cleaning and storage after using Pyrodex.

Remember, each gun shoots differently, and with any gunpowder, densities vary from lot to lot. Therefore, shooters should try various loads to determine the best proportion of power and accuracy. But remember, Pyrodex, just like black powder, can be overloaded. The most common sign of too much powder in an external-hammered percussion rifle is gas blowback through the nipple. This is what has occurred when the hammer returns to the half-cock position after a shot. This is dangerous, and the amount of powder in the load must be reduced. Always follow the manufacturer's recommended loads and do not exceed the safe maximum.

The real revolution in muzzleloader hunting took place when Hodgdon took its Pyrodex to a more convenient level: pellets. With the company compressing the particles into a compact 50-caliber cylinder, hunters no longer need to carry the components for loading bulk powder. But to overcome the higher, 740-degree ignition temperature for this class B flammable solid (black powder is a 480-degree class A explosive), a base of black powder was added to the bottom of the pellet. To load

these pellets for optimum ignition, the black base of the pellet must be loaded first into the bore. Also, care must be taken not to crush the pellet.

To hunt with pellets, it's important that the nipple and breech plug be clean and dry or proper ignition may not occur. To guarantee an open channel for ignition gasses to the pellet, use a pipe cleaner to clean the neck of the nipple and a nipple pick to open the flash hole. The same treatment should be given to the breech plug of an in-line percussion system. After cleaning, spray a degreaser through the nipple and breech plug. High pressure degreasing sprays will flush all solid debris, lubricants, solvents and moisture from the flash channel, providing an uninhibited path for the flash to ignite the pellet.

Smaller caliber rifles, particularly percussions with large nipple snails (right-angle flash channels leading into the bore) may encounter problems with replica powders.

Hodgdon also recommends sabots using 45-caliber bullets in 50-caliber rifles. The .45s appear to increase accuracy over the .44s, as do one-piece sabots over two. Conical bullet users need to pay special attention to the base of lead bullets when using powder pellets. A fiber wad is required, to act as a gas seal, or accuracy will suffer, leading of the bore will occur, velocity will drop, and the possibility of launching a flaming pellet into the ground cover exists. It is recommended that a soft lube be used around the wad to assist in the creation of a tight gas seal, as well as keeping the fouling soft in the bore.

Pyrodex is available in 50-caliber, 50-grain, equivalent and 50-caliber, 30-grain, equivalent pellets. This allows loads from light 30-grain practice rounds through 50-, 60-, 80-, 90-, 100-, 110- and 120-grain hunting load combinations. Yes, even the whopper 150-grain equivalents can be achieved with three 50-grain pellets. Hodgdon Powder Company, however, states in its manual that the maximum load per shot should never exceed total pellets containing more than 100 grains volume equivalent. Exceeding maximum loads may cause excessive pressure and could damage the firearm and cause personal injury or death to the shooter. Hodgdon specifically disclaims any and all liability from exceeding their maximum load warning. The 150-grain magnum loads produce higher velocities than smaller offerings, but my money is on the more accurate, less-recoil producing, customized loads. For those who shoot the big bores, .54 and .58, there will be a larger diameter 60-grain pellet being produced in the near future.

In-line muzzleloading rifles started pushing the velocity envelope in the 1990s. One hundred grains didn't create enough velocity for magnum performance. Three pellets, 150 grains of Pyrodex, could push lightweight bullets past the 2,000 feet per second threshold, allowing muzzleloading energies adequate for whitetails out to 200 yards. But three pellets, even with their hollow centers and black powder bases, didn't always burn with consistent pressures in carbine barrels. So, the quest was on for better percussion caps. Thus, the 209 shotgun primer came into vogue for in-lines.

Even the flintlock has succumbed to the Pyrodex pellet. Because Pyrodex won't ignite until the ignition temperature of 740-degrees is reached, 260 degrees higher than black powder, most flintlock hunters don't use it. As previously mentioned, Hodgdon Powder Company has solved this problem by coating the bottom of the Pyrodex pellet with black powder. This works great with in-line percussion ignition, but the black powder base sits too low in the breech for most flintlocks to take advantage of it.

The T/C Firestorm is one of those flintlocks/percussions to have adapted to the pellet by creating a cone breech plug that raises the BP base of the pellet in line with the touch hole.

The next step in the evolution of replica black powders took place in 2002. Hodgdon introduced Triple Se7en. Citing better performance, hotter velocities per volume, and clean up with ordinary tap water, hunters took notice. According to Hodgdon, Triple Se7en produces the highest velocities of all granular muzzleloading propellants when compared by volume. An added bonus is that the enhanced velocity results in a flatter trajectory and downrange energy. Triple Se7en is sulfur free and virtually odorless. Because of the lack of sulfur, the fouling is easy to clean up with plain water.

Triple Se7en works with all styles and brands of projectiles, which makes it easy to find a load and maintain accuracy. Triple Se7en is also a higher energy replica product designed to provide the muzzleloading hunter with higher velocities when using the same volume of black powder. To duplicate a GOEX or Schuetzen black powder load, you must decrease the powder charge by 15 percent.

But can this Class B flammable solid be used in a flintlock? While Chris Hodgdon of Hodgdon Powder Company won't officially advertise its usefulness in primitive flintlocks and side hammer percussions, because of the higher ignition temperature (around 740-degrees Fahrenheit), I've had success with it in large calibers (.50, .54 and .58.) I've used Triple Se7en pellets in a Thompson/Center .50 Firestorm, a bulk powder Triple Se7en load in a .54 Dixie Gun Works American Jaeger, and Triple Se7en FFg bulk powder in a .58 T/C Big Bore percussion, and it performed flawlessly in all of them.

Smaller caliber rifles, particularly flintlocks and percussions with large nipple snails (right-angle flash channels leading into the bore) may encounter problems with replica powders. If you are determined to use it, though, practice at the bench and in cold weather, before you take the rifle to the deer woods. Flintlock hunters will still need to deal with the higher ignition temperatures of Triple Se7en by using five grains of FFFFg as a starter charge of black powder. Remember to reduce the main load of Triple Se7en by five grains to compensate for the black power starter charge, though.

Another replica powder that is turning heads this year is GOEX Pinnacle. Claiming a slightly lower ignition temperature, about 600 degrees Fahrenheit, this powder may be the crossover replica for black powder that flintlock shooters have been looking for. My early testing shows that it works well for the main powder train, but I would still stick with the black powder for priming a flinter.

The new GOEX Pinnacle replica powder comes in grades 2Fg and 3Fg, as well as a compressed form called EZ Loads. These 50-grain sticks are designed for 50-caliber in-lines, but I have found that they work just as well in my .54. Like Triple Se7en, the GOEX Pinnacle (as well as the American Pioneer Powder and Black Mag 3) cleans up with just cold water.

Replica powders do offer hunters less fouling gunpowder for their muzzleloaders, but shooters need to be aware that percussion caps and primers still have a nasty habit of clogging up the nipples and fire channels in breech plugs. Running a fouling patch up and down the bore will still help accuracy and would guarantee that a second shot will ignite when you expect it to, not an inaccurate second later. □

Fun Game answers:

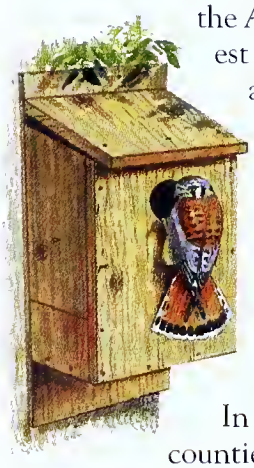
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PENNSYLVANIA

CROSSINGS

WHEN SOMETHING common begins to fade away, it often takes a while for the loss to creep into our consciousness. Earlier this summer, I spent a morning riding my bike around the back roads near my home, past the neatly tended fields of Pennsylvania Dutch farms and the long, blue wooded hills. I saw redtails riding the thermals, was scolded by red-winged blackbirds in the meadows and catbirds when I coasted through thickets. It was only later that I realized I'd seen no kestrels.

At one time, this would have been like not seeing woodchucks or cottontails, for the American kestrel is the quintessential raptor of open farmland, our smallest and most colorful falcon, a bird at ease around people, happy to nest in a hollow fencerow tree or a nook in the corner of a barn or outbuilding. In their 2000 book on Pennsylvania birds, ornithologists Jerry McWilliams and Dan Brauning noted that "since the earliest ornithological records, they have been regarded as common year-round."



But something is seriously wrong in the kestrel's world. In the 1970s, breeding populations in the Northeast began a steady decline that continues today, while wintering populations, as measured by Christmas Bird Count data, have plummeted by an alarming 4.6 percent a year in that same period.

In the area around Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, in Schuylkill and Berks counties, where sanctuary researchers have for decades been monitoring hundreds of kestrel nest boxes, nesting attempts fell by 40 percent in just the past five years, with a staggering 57 percent decline in productivity. No one's suggesting the kestrel is about to disappear, but clearly something's amiss.

What is the problem? It may be several things. Kestrels still carry surprisingly heavy loads of pesticides like DDT that were banned decades ago, but which linger in the environment. The recovery of Cooper's hawk populations in recent years, combined with greater fragmentation of farmland by development, which favors the larger hawk, may play a role, as Cooper's hawks will kill and eat kestrels. West Nile virus, which arrived in the East within the last five years, may also be playing a significant role, as Hawk Mountain researchers found that almost all adult kestrels in their study area had been exposed to the disease.

When something once common begins to fade, it can be hard to know what to do to stop that loss. Fortunately, any rural Pennsylvanian can help kestrels by building and maintaining nest boxes. Finding suitable nesting sites is still a challenge for kestrels, and a correctly sized box, placed in the right spot (on an isolated tree or tall pole, surrounded by at least an acre of open ground) can make the difference between a successful breeding season and lost opportunity. Building boxes also makes a great school, Scout, FFA or 4-H activity.

You can find nest box plans and more information about kestrels at http://www.hawkmountain.org/education/adopt_a_kestrel_schoolchildren.htm.

Woodcrafting for Wildlife is a good source for nest box plans, and is available from the Game Commission's "Outdoor Shop" at www.pgc.state.pa.us or can be ordered by calling 1-888-888-3459. The book costs $5.66 plus 6% sales tax for state residents.

Scott Weidensaul

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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Own firearms or want to own a firearm? Enjoy hunting and target shooting?

Supply alcohol to minors or allow minors to drink and you can lose your right to own firearms. In Pennsylvania, if you are convicted of corruption of minors you are banned from owning and possessing firearms.



Pennsylvania is getting tough on underage drinking and the adults who allow it.

Pennsylvania Crimes Code Title 18 Section 6105 Persons not to possess, use, manofacture, control, sell or transfer firearms.
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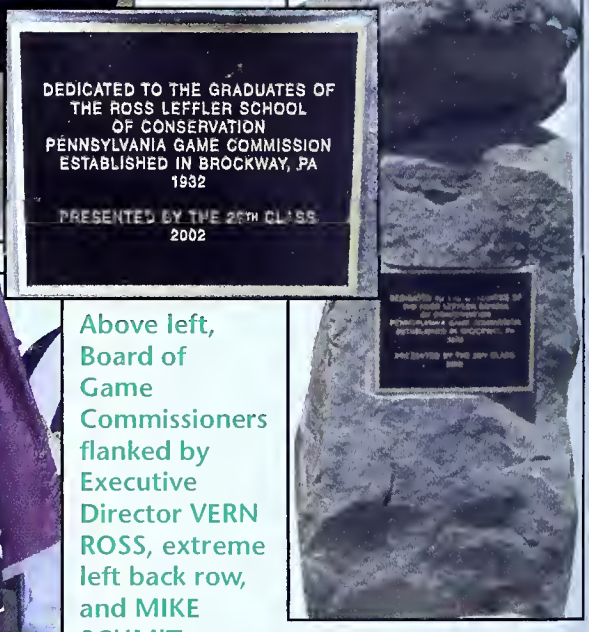
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26TH Class Project Dedicated

THE 26TH Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, for its class project had a stone podium brought from the original RLSC and erected on the grounds of Harrisburg headquarters complex, where the RLSC is now located. The podium had been used from the early 1930s to the mid-1980s, when the school was on SGL 54 just outside of Brockway in Jefferson County. As part of the June meeting of the Board of Commissioners, a dedication ceremony was held commemorating this project.

Photos by Hal Korber







Above left, Board of Game Commissioners flanked by Executive Director VERN ROSS, extreme left back row, and MIKE SCHMIT, Deputy Executive Director, right.

York County WCO CHAD EYLER, above, spearheded the class project (26th Class, right) dedication of the stone podium to be used as an outdoor classroom for future RLSC classes. "Future classes will use this site so that those who come after us will remember those who came before," Eyler said at the dedication ceremony.



letters

Editor:

Being a devout reader of *Game News* for more than 20 years, I really enjoy your magazine. Being a devout history buff, too, I must point out that in the May issue, in the story about Rozy Stidd, the reference to the bombing of Pearl Harbor should have been 1941, not 1942.

D. Drendall
Bear Creek Twp.

Thanks, and you were not the only reader to point out that error. It shouldn't have gotten by us, either, because we talked about it here in the office when we were working on that feature.

Editor:

When I called your office and said that my husband accidentally threw out the March issue, which had a photo of my niece and her trophy buck, your staff was kind enough to send me five copies, enough for family members, too.

In appreciation, please accept my check as a donation to be used as you see fit.

I love *Game News* and was thrilled when you printed the photo of my niece with her deer. I've read *Game News* for at least 20 years.

J. Bair
Port Royal

Editor:

Enclosed please find a check for a 1-year subscription. I have been a cooperating farmer for 30 some years, and think you could have saved money some other way than to stop our subscriptions.

Anyway, I have to tell you that I got my first hunting license in 1938. It cost $2 and covered everything, except some years after that there was a special "doe license."

We had some very good small game hunting when I was young, but not many deer. Now I hunt mainly deer and groundhogs.

H. Steele
Marion Center

1938 was when the first statewide antlerless season was held, and 171,662 were taken. There was no buck season that year, either. Over the years, antlerless licenses were issued off and on, and for only some counties. They have been issued every year, statewide, since 1951.

Editor:

As a nonresident, I'm concerned about the cutbacks in antlerless deer licenses. In WMU 2F, for example, where our camp is located, the number of antlerless deer licenses has been cut from 44,000 last year to 30,000 this year. This year, because of the cuts, nonresidents are not likely to get any licenses for this WMU.

I think the Game Commission should realize that nonresidents spend a great deal on travel, lodging, meals and other items, along with licenses fees.

I think nonresidents should be able to apply for antlerless licenses at the same time as residents.

J. Liebel
N. Ridgeville, OH

The Game Commission recognizes what nonresident hunters mean to the agency's license sales and the state's economy. Compared to other states, nonresidents get a great deal for their license dollars here, too. Antlerless deer license allocations, though, are a deer management tool, not a means to increase hunting opportunities or revenue, and that residents have an advantage is something we all must accept when hunting out of state.

Editor:

The Field Note in the June issue, about retired LMO Dick Belding running into a fellow *Game News* reader in Arizona seemed to fit my situation. I retired to Florida several years ago, but still look forward to *Game News* each month. When I'm done with my issues, I give them to a local hunter and his son. They are always glad to get them, and a few years ago they even went on a Pennsylvania hunting trip. The magazines then end up at a hunting lodge in Alabama, where I know all the members read them.

T. Baker
Milton, FL

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

The bushes had either taken over or were about to take over the trails. We had a choice, either abandon this location or get to work . . .

Changes and Chances

By Kathi Ponzetti

SEVERAL COUSINS, friends and I had hunted a hillside on a small section of property that was once part of a large farm in Westmoreland County. The hillside had been selectively logged several years prior to us gaining permission to hunt there. As a result, there were some large open spaces among the oak, cherry, hickory, maple and walnut trees left standing, but the "jagger" bushes — mostly multiflora rose, greenbrier and blackberry bushes — had rapidly overtaken these openings. I couldn't believe how fast they had grown and spread.

The bushes had either taken over or were about to take over the trails and had overgrown many of the openings. The previous year's hunting season drove home just how bad the choking vegetation had become. We had a choice, either abandon this location or get to work.

After receiving permission, my partners and I worked nearly every weekend from June through mid-September, removing and pruning the aggressive vegetation. During our work we found the remnant of a logging road that made walking up the hill easier than the route we had been taking and also several well-traveled deer trails. To connect our spots, we cut a new trail through the thick brush. It seemed, though, that as soon as we turned our backs on that multiflora rose, it tried to take over again. (I also learned firsthand why multiflora rose is sometimes called "the ripper rose.")

One evening in early August I went up the hill to do more pruning and I ran into an older gentleman. After introducing himself, John explained that he used to go birding on this hillside, until the logging road became so overgrown he had to stop. He had been wondering who had opened it, and was glad he could come back.

John told me the openings were good for attracting and watching birds. We also talked about the increased sightings of birds of prey. It was nice to hear, particularly because my cousin Bill and I had talked about how our habitat changes might benefit the area wildlife.

By the time we stopped working, in September, I had met four more people who used the logging road to come up and go birding. From them I learned more about the birds using the openings and I was able to answer their questions about hunting.

After setting up our treestands on the

third weekend of September, we didn't return to the hillside until the first day of archery season. BJ took a doe that evening, and Bill and I each saw three deer.

I took the first week off from work, and Monday found me settled in my stand by 6 a.m. At 6:15 I could see a deer in the moonlight, walking toward my stand on a trail to my right. It was a buck, but I couldn't tell if it had four points on a side, and by the time shooting time arrived, he had gone up the hill. That was the only deer I saw, but I did see several gray and red squirrels, a grouse, too many chipmunks to count, three different hawks, a large owl, a rabbit, many songbirds, a groundhog and a weasel.

I could see a deer in the moonlight, walking toward my stand on a trail to my right. It was a buck, but I couldn't tell if it had four points on a side . . .

Tuesday brought a change in the weather. Following a light frost overnight, the air was crisp, and the moon was so bright I walked to my stand without using my flashlight. Shortly after 7 a.m. I saw three deer working their way down a trail to my stand. At 30 yards the lead doe stopped and tested the air, then continued walking. She was 20 yards away when she stopped again. As I took aim, she suddenly bolted and ran up the hill, followed closely by the other two.

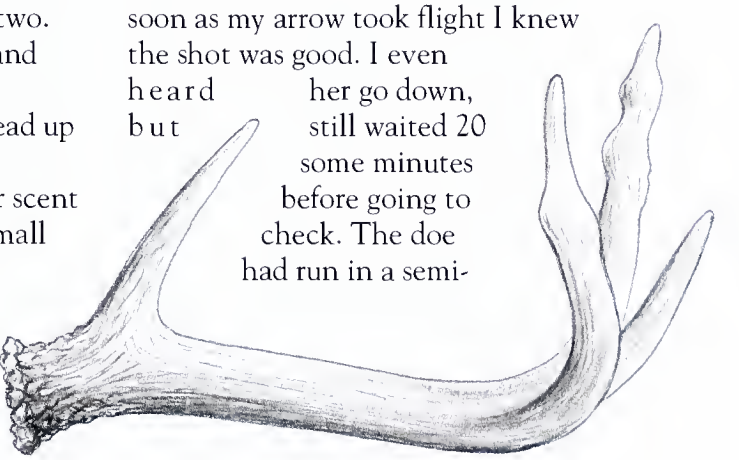
Sitting there shaking my head and wondering what had happened, I remembered the deer lifting her head up as she sniffed the air.

I was trying a new brand of deer scent and had hung a scented pad in a small tree to my right, about 10 yards from my stand. The buck I had seen the previous morning went right over to it. That had to be it; I must have too much scent on the pad.

The doe's wide-eyed reaction and body language once she got in closer reminded me of the time I used a rut scent too early. I figured if I was going to have a chance at either a buck or a doe that I had to do something right then, so I got down as quickly as I could and took the pad off the tree. I lightly brushed the pad on a couple leaves on the tree, put the pad in a plastic bag, and then climbed back up to my stand.

About 45 minutes later I saw a deer slightly off to my left, about 50 yards away. Watching the deer, I heard a noise, and I slowly looked down and farther to my left and saw two nice does browsing along a trail that goes in front of my stand.

The lead doe raised her head, tilted it back, and then began sniffing the air just like the doe that had spooked earlier. I held my breath, and she continued on, coming into range, but I didn't have a good angle. Wait until she walks past, I kept telling myself. Finally, only 10 yards from my stand, she stopped and turned broadside. As soon as my arrow took flight I knew the shot was good. I even heard her go down, but still waited 20 some minutes before going to check. The doe had run in a semi-



circle, and I located her about 25 yards behind my stand.

I hunted the rest of the week and saw plenty of wildlife, and even had deer bed down nearby. On Wednesday evening a 6-point came in, and I watched him for 15 or so minutes as he fed and then rubbed a small tree. It was interesting observing him rub the trunk, lick it, appear to look at it and then rub the trunk again. He repeated these steps several times before he was satisfied with his efforts and continued on up the hill.

The buck lifted his head and sniffed the air. It was not a full lip curl, but something caught his attention.

I saw two more bucks Thursday evening, but not within range, and I couldn't tell if they where legal. Seeing all this activity made all the work we had done over the summer worthwhile. The crowning moment of the week came when an immature bald eagle glided over, just above the treetops above my treestand.

The next time I got out hunting was the following weekend. Saturday morning was cool and rain was in the forecast. I was alone: work, a bad cold and an early morning errand kept my cousins and friends from joining me.

A lot of leaves had fallen over the past week, and as daylight brightened the clouds started to thicken, making me glad my carbon suit is waterproof, too. Suddenly there was loud crunching of leaves in front of me. It sounded like several deer were running across the hillside. I strained my eyes trying to look through the tangle of grapevines in front of me. A red fox appeared, and it was chasing something. I couldn't see what, but I assumed it was a chipmunk or a field mouse as I should have been able to see if it was a rabbit or squirrel. Whatever, as I watched, the fox had its breakfast at the edge of a field and then disappeared back into the thick cover.

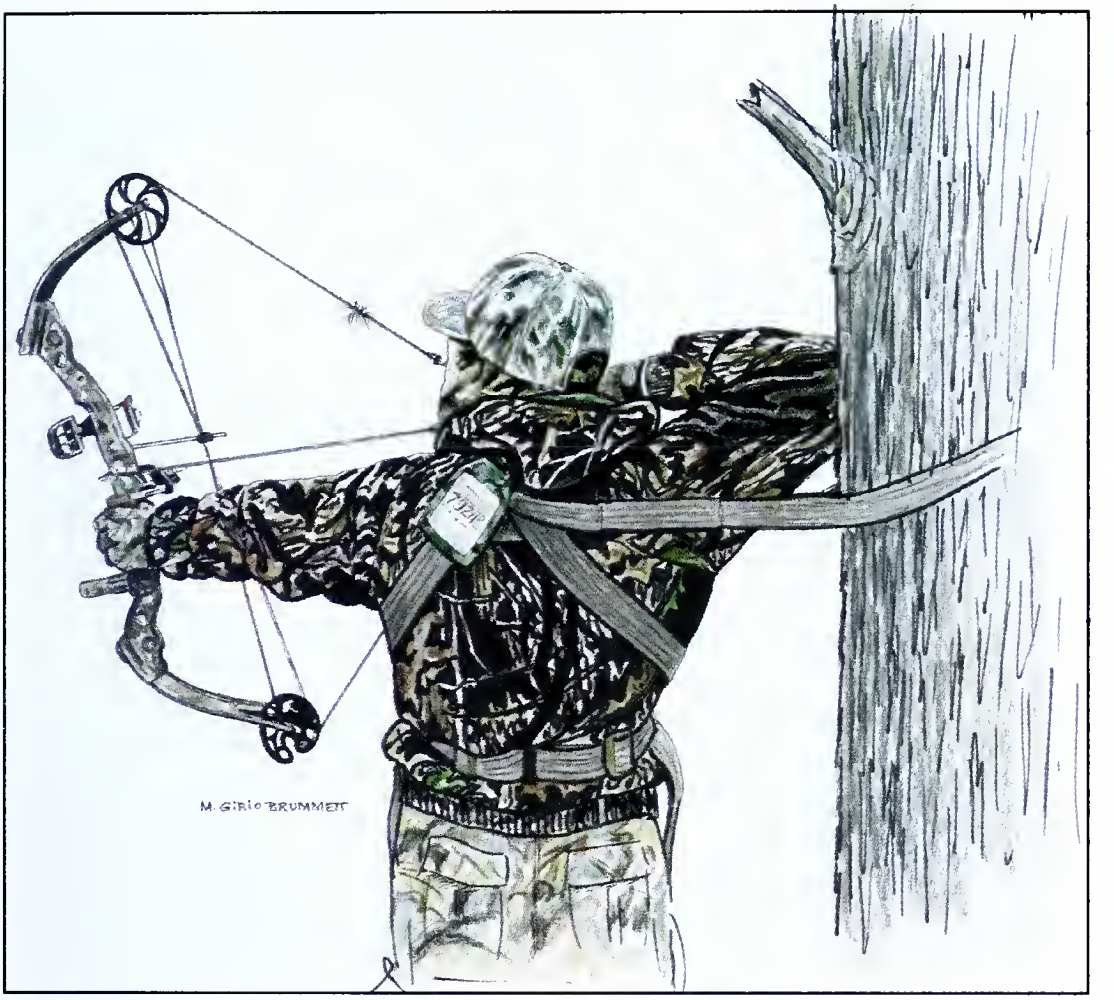
It started to drizzle, and did so for a few minutes on and off over the next hour. After a while I heard the soft crunching of leaves and a deer appeared under my treestand. Looking down through the bottom platform, I saw it was a buck, but I didn't have a clear look at the rack. I thought it might be the 6-point I had seen earlier.

The buck then walked out from under my tree, turned on the trail to my right and began to feed on the bright red berries that had dropped from the trees only a few yards from my stand. I counted four points on the right antler, so it was legal, but the buck was facing away from me.

My heart was pounding as I watched the buck slowly feed away from me. Concentrate, concentrate, I kept repeating to myself. I knew at 20 yards the trail turned slightly to the left and that turn would position the buck for a good quartering away shot, if he stayed on the trail.

The buck lifted his head and sniffed the air. It was not a full lip curl, but something caught his attention. He went over to the small tree where I had placed a few drops of a curiosity scent. He was less then 15 yards away and broadside. It seemed as if the buck wheeled and was running at the same time I heard the sound of the bowstring. I watched him run down the trail and disappear. I thought my shot was good shot, and shortly after I lost sight of the buck I heard the sounds of breaking twigs.

Ten minutes later it started to rain,



and this time it was no drizzle. I decided to get down and check the immediate area where the buck was when I shot. I walked over to the small tree and located my arrow sticking up out of the ground. Checking the arrow I knew I had made a good shot and that the sound of the breaking twigs must have been the buck going down. The rain was not letting up, and not wanting to lose the blood trail, I began to follow it.

The buck had cut down the hill and onto a trail on the left, and as soon as I got to the trail, I saw him. It appeared he had collapsed after jumping over a log and fallen into some multiflora rose bushes.

After giving thanks for the buck, I tagged and got him out of the rose thicket and back on the trail. He was big, 180 pounds field-dressed, I learned later, and sported a 9-point rack that looked like arthritic hands; that's the best way I know how to describe the knuckle-like bulges on some of the tines. I was told later, when describing the antler's appearance, that most likely an insect had gotten into the antlers while in velvet and that caused the knuckle-like deformities.

With a nice doe and then a big 9-point, my season sure was exciting, and it didn't begin with the opening of archery season. It began months earlier, when my partners and I began working to enhance the habitat for deer and other wildlife. □

Grampa Jennings' Diary — "Talkin' Goose"

By Bruce Murphy

GRAMPA JENNINGS, who was born, lived, hunted and fished in Pennsylvania, kept a diary of his outdoor escapades. He bragged that he never missed a first day of hunting or fishing in his entire life, and he didn't mean to start now, either. Grampa told his stories to the family, wrote them on yellow lined paper, and filed them (stuck them would be a better phrase) in the bottom drawer of an old bookcase in the living room. There they remained until he recently decided to pass them on to his family.

His stories are true, mostly. Grampa embellished only when the occasion deemed it absolutely necessary. He didn't approve of prevarication in any form. The characters are real, and their names have not been changed to protect the innocent. Grampa always said, "The innocent don't need protecting."



Grampa always started his stories with the same phrase: "Well, let me tell ya." As soon as those five words left his lips, we knew we were going to hear a tale, fiction or non-fiction, that would hold our interest for the next 15 or 20 minutes. This evening's story would be no different.

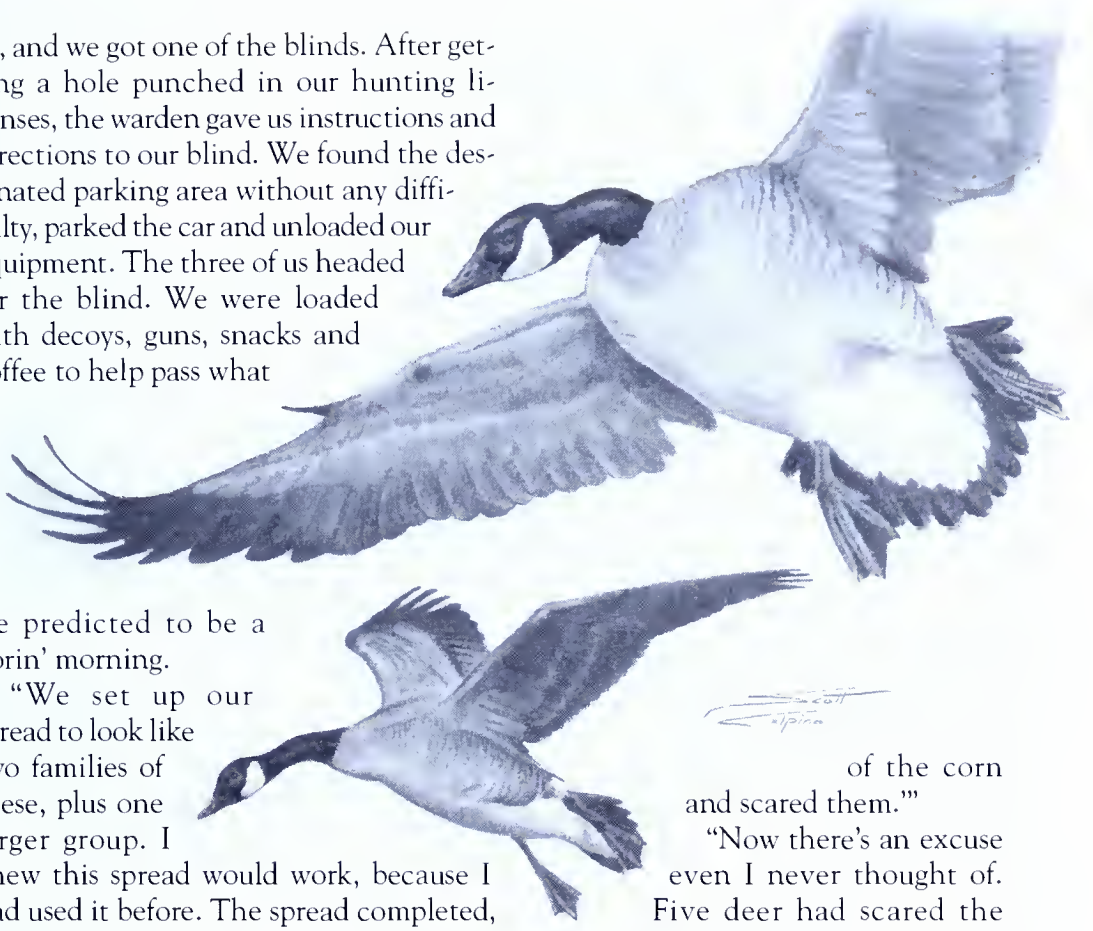
"Well, let me tell ya," Grampa Jennings began. "Cris, Jack and I got into the car that November morning and discussed why we were making this trip. It was predicted to be one of the worst days possible to hunt geese. It was the end of November, and the sky was high, the wind from the south, and the temperature would be in the 60s — a bluebird day. Despite the prediction, we were goin' goose huntin' at one of the prime goosin' areas in western Pennsylvania, a place called Pymatuning.

The Game Commission manages the Pymatuning Waterfowl Management Area in Crawford County. If you're lucky enough to draw a blind, they let you take some friends, some decoys and 10 shells into a ready made blind for some really good shootin.' Well, as I was saying before I interrupted myself with an explanation, we thought that today would be the absolutely worst day of hunting ever, and we said so over and over as we drove north.

"We arrived at the management building with time to spare, and went to the window and asked how many 'No Shows' there might be today. The 'warden' told us that there were several. The three of us put our names on the card, gave it to the warden and waited for the drawing.

"Lemme tell ya. Lady Luck smiled on

us, and we got one of the blinds. After getting a hole punched in our hunting licenses, the warden gave us instructions and directions to our blind. We found the designated parking area without any difficulty, parked the car and unloaded our equipment. The three of us headed for the blind. We were loaded with decoys, guns, snacks and coffee to help pass what we predicted to be a borin' morning.



"We set up our spread to look like two families of geese, plus one larger group. I knew this spread would work, because I had used it before. The spread completed, we tucked into the blind for the long wait. I tried out my three calls. 'Now,' I said to Cris and Jack, 'let's sit back and relax. Take a nap, and if the geese come, I'll wake ya.'

"Well, nobody slept, and about 8:15 the geese started to fly. I started talkin' goose. *Kahonk*, *kahonk*, I blew through my calls. The birds would cup and head toward our decoys, and some would even make it to us without getting scattered by skybusters in a neighboring blind. We watched in amazement as these birds circled over our head. *Kahonk*, *kahonk*, I spoke to them and they circled. They came within shooting range several times, but we wouldn't shoot. Remember, we were allowed only 10 shells, so we wanted to pick our shots.

"One time I had a group of 10 Canadas talkin' to me, cupped and locked up headin' for our spread. They talked. I talked. When they were still 100 yards away they flared. 'What happened? Cris, did you do something?' I asked."

"'No,' he answered. 'Five deer came out of the corn and scared them.'"

"Now there's an excuse even I never thought of. Five deer had scared the geese away. I hadn't seen the deer 'cause I was crouched low at the other end of the blind.

"Throughout the morning, we all missed some shots we should have made, but we were being careful to pick birds we considered easy shots. Maybe we were too careful. Maybe we didn't keep our heads on the stocks of our guns, or maybe we weren't the marksmen we thought we were. And, don't forget, we each had only 10 shells in our pocket.

"Once, I swear, there were three groups of birds circling our decoys at the same time. I talked. They talked. As a bird would get out of line, two quick *kahonks* on my call would pull it back in and the birds would continue to drop. I do believe that my callin' was never as good as it was on that day. I really believed on that day I could speak goose language.

"One of the rules at Pymatuning is

Goose Blind Application Procedures

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area
or
Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area

Permittees to hunt these areas during goose season are selected by public drawings held prior to the hunting season. An individual may apply to only one area per year and may submit only one application from the current Hunting & Trapping Digest.

Mailed applications for Middle Creek will be accepted through Sept. 13, and selected through a public drawing on Wednesday, Sept. 14, at 10 a.m. Mailed applications for Pymatuning will be accepted through Sept. 10, and selected through a public drawing at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 17.

The application must contain the applicant's 2005-2006 hunting license (Back Tag) number and letter.

A separate drawing is held for blinds that accommodate hunters with disabilities. Applicants must submit a copy of their current Disabled Person Permit (permit to hunt from a vehicle) issued by the PGC.

New this year is a youth-only day at Middle Creek (November 19) and Pymatuning (November 26). See page 89 of the current *Hunting & Trapping Digest* for details.

Blinds at Middle Creek and Pymatuning will not be operational during the September season or in the late season. Shooting days at **Middle Creek** are **Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays** and **Saturdays**. Shooting days at **Pymatuning** are **Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays** and **Saturdays**.

Successful applicants will be mailed a hunting reservation entitling them to be accompanied by a maximum of three guests. Apply to:

PGC Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area
Post Office Box 110
Kleinfeltersville, PA 17039-0110
OR
PGC Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area
9552 Hartstown Rd.
Hartstown, PA 16131

that you have to be outta your blind at 12:30, and at 11:45 we didn't have even a single bird. We were gonna be skunked. After a morning like this, it would be embarrassing to go home without birds. Nobody would believe us.

"Just before noon, though, I lined up about a dozen birds on our left. They cupped. I talked. I had them at about 200 yards when I glanced over my shoulder. 'Forget them birds, and look behind, as we got about two hundred comin' at us. No, 400!' I don't know where they came from, but there they were, and what noise they made. It was music to a goose hunter's ear. I picked what I thought was a good shot and down came a bird. Jack and Cris both missed. As I picked up my bird, I checked my watch. Both hands were straight up — noon. We had 30 minutes left.

"Fifteen minutes later we picked up and bundled our decoys. It seemed that one bird would be it for the day. I was standing in the middle of the open field, and Jack and Cris were talking outside of the blind when I noticed four birds heading right for us. I didn't have a gun with me, because I had my bird. 'Shoot,' I yelled. Both reloaded their guns and fired. Cris's shot connected and down came another Canada.

"When we checked our birds at the management building, the warden congratulated us and examined them.

"'Two immature females,' he informed us. 'Both good size birds.'"

"'You guys do good work,' I said. 'And we appreciate it.'

"He thanked us, and we headed home. It had been a good day after all. The weather prediction was accurate but, fortunately, our prediction for success was not, and when we got home, we didn't have to throw clothes in the washer. We were dry and mud free." □



Pete's Guns

By Bob Steiner

IN THE FLATS along the river I heard the .218 Bee snap twice. When I reached the walnut trees where I had left Pete, he just shook his head, smiling. He held two chubby gray squirrels by the hind feet, tails blowing in the breeze. He sure liked accurate rifles. To the best of my knowledge, those squirrels were the last game Pete ever got. Not long after, he had a heart attack and died.

In his early 50s when he passed away, Pete was the best neighbor two young newly weds in their first home could ever have. When anything broke, he was there to fix it. He also loved to talk about hunting. His passion was crow shooting with a 16-gauge Remington Sportsman 48 and groundhog hunting with a custom built .25-06 Improved — a heavy gun with a bull barrel — and the little .218 Bee. He used a Remington Model 721 .30-06 for deer hunting. Pete was a reloader and could make

all his guns shoot well.

After his death, his widow, Thelma, decided to sell his guns, because none of their three girls had any interest in hunting. I wanted them because they were Pete's. My father and I bought the lot of them, and the tale of Pete's guns continued.

The .25-06 Improved accounted for a few groundhogs, and after my father's death it ended up with an uncle,



where it continued to serve the purpose for which it was intended. The pride of the lot was relegated to ridding farmers of hole-digging varmints.

I had seen Pete shoot the shotgun only once. It was on a warm, sunny, November afternoon when Pete, my wife, Linda, and I went pheasant hunting on a nearby game lands. I had elected to carry only a camera, hoping to get some action photos of two of my favorite hunting buddies. We coursed back and forth through the high grass and along the strips of autumn olive. Pete's habit of heavy smoking caused him to move slowly. We had stopped for one of many "breathers" when I spotted a hen pheasant squatting in a hedgerow (hens are legal in our neck of the woods). I called for my hunters to get ready, and I horsed my way into the thick brush and flushed the bird.

The pheasant pulled the oldest trick in the book: It flushed straight away in the open. Six shots later, without as much as a lost feather, the pheasant glided away. We laughed until tears ran down our cheeks. It was the only bird we flushed that day, and the last Pete would ever shoot at.

A snowy afternoon 20 years later, and at the opposite end of the state, I decided to try some grouse hunting. I don't have bird dogs, so I restrict my grouse hunting to when the ground is snow covered, which makes recovery of downed birds easier. I picked up my 12-gauge workhorse shotgun and headed for the door, but then I remembered the 48. It had not been used for 20 years, so I thought it was time to get it out.

Circling a patch of pines, I found a fresh grouse track. I hadn't gone far into the dogwood when a grouse erupted in a shower of dried leaves and snow. I shouldered the gun, wheeled to get my feet aligned and mashed the trigger. The grouse just ceased flying, seemed to hang in the air, and then fell with a thud. I

smoothed the feathers and then just started laughing. I had shot only a few flying grouse; usually I missed them. That afternoon I knew for certain that the Sportsman 48 wasn't in my hands when the trigger was squeezed. Pete just couldn't give up the shotgun after three misses on that pheasant hunt long ago. Now that Pete was done with the gun, it could finally be mine.

The .218 Bee, however, with its 4x Redfield Widefield scope, found its service quickly elevated once it came into my ownership. My wife claimed it as her mountain turkey gun. It was deadly accurate and did little damage to the meat. After she broke a flock and called the birds back in, the little Bee would snap and a turkey would be left flopping. Pete never killed a turkey, and when we talked about it he'd always smile, look down and shake his head. Someday he wanted to try it, he'd say. Before the new wildlife management units stipulated using shotguns in our favorite turkey haunts, the Bee accounted for more than half a dozen birds.

Many hunters get excited over a gun cabinet full of shiny new firearms. I like my guns with a history. I like to grip and cheek a stock and squint down along the barrel of a gun that has been gripped and cheeked before.

One fall morning the Bee chalked up the only shot of the day. A flock of 30 or 40 hens and poults had roosted in a deep hemlock hollow the evening before, and early the next morning they began to drop to the ground not 70 yards from where the Bee rested across Linda's lap. Linda had the Bee's sights aligned on a turkey, took a deep breath, and at the shot birds scattered in every direction. All except one young gobbler that lay thrashing on the leaves. Four fellow hunters spent the day trying to call in one of the other birds, but to no avail. Pete would have enjoyed knowing what a fine turkey gun the Bee had become.

In Pete's living room was a strange, gnarly set of antlers from his last buck. A handload from the Model 721 .30-06 put the buck down from a long way off. Once when we had talked about guns, Pete mentioned needing to get the ejector fixed on the 721. Now and then it would fail to eject the empty, he said.

Fifteen years after Pete's guns became mine, I decided to save an antlerless license for gun hunting, instead of using them all up in archery season, as is usually my habit. On a frosty morning I sat waiting at the bottom of a huge clearcut with the Model 721 rested over a log. At the top of the clearcut, nearly 300 yards away, a group of nine does slinked away from some hunters who were in the woods beyond. I picked an adult doe standing broadside in an opening and sent one of Pete's handloads on its way. When the gun settled after the recoil, I could see the doe on the ground.

With the abundance of antlerless licenses in the late 1980s and '90s, the 721 accrued an impressive list of one-shot kills, including an opening morning buck the year my long archery season streak finally ended. But the legacy of the 721 wasn't complete. It still needed to remind

me of words spoken long ago.

It was 2002, the first year of antler restrictions. I had to pass on two bucks early in the season, and my frustration with having to do two things at once, count points and pick a clear shot on a moving animal, was mounting.

In the afternoon on the last day a volley of shots sounded to my left as I eased through a multiflora rose tangle. Brush crashed, and suddenly a legal buck stood a scant five yards in front of me, looking back. He flopped down next to a log, with just his head and neck showing. I put the crosshairs on the back of his neck down low, and proceeded to shoot a gaping hole in the log. The buck jumped up, looking stunned and stared right at me. I worked the bolt and the empty cartridge stayed in the chamber. Holding the live round out of the way with my thumb, I tried to eject it again. It stayed and the buck just stood staring. Using my pocketknife I finally extracted the empty and had just gotten the bolt closed on a fresh round when the deer decided he had seen enough.

I began tracking the buck and a shot rang out ahead. An old-timer stood over the fallen deer. I offered to help get it off the mountain for him but he refused, saying that dragging was "half the fun." As I started down the logging road in the winter twilight, I reflected on a full season of hunting. Suddenly I clearly remembered the conversation 20 years before with Pete about the Model 721, the time he told me that the "ejector needed fixed."

That day was the first time I hunted with the 721 that I needed a second shot. I grinned, knowing that the old-timer on the mountain was leaning into a drag rope with a fine buck attached. If it wasn't his last, it certainly was close to it. Pete and the 721 knew that hunter needed the buck more than I did.

Many hunters get excited over a gun cabinet full of shiny new firearms. I like my guns with a history. I like to grip and cheek a stock and squint down along the barrel of a gun that has been gripped and cheeked before. I like to pull a trigger that has "veteran" written on it, the bluing worn off by honest work. I like to look at the nicks in a stock while I sit on stand and try to remember where I did it or imagine when the previous owner may have and how.

When I bought Pete's guns, I knew they had memories attached. I knew many of their stories. I knew that every time I hunted with them or just wiped them off, I would be reminded of their histories. To have had the privilege to write a little more hunting history of my own with them is just icing on the cake. □

Cover Photo by James H. Shuey

THERE'S NOTHING quite as awe inspiring as the bugle of a bull elk at daybreak on a crisp September morning, except, perhaps, the gobble of a tom turkey on a fresh spring morning — and that's debatable. A September elk season is set for **2006**, with 10 licenses allocated, and applications for those and the 40 licenses allocated for the November 7-12 season this fall are being accepted online, through the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) through September 19. Mail-in applications must be received by August 29, 2005, and can be printed from the agency's website or obtained from the current *Hunting & Trapping Digest* received with the purchase of a hunting license. Also in the Digest, check out photos of some of the elk harvested in prior Pennsylvania seasons.

Those last two weeks of the season are hard to beat for buck activity, but connecting is never a sure thing . . .

Bad Luck, No Buck

By Bob Rummel

I ROLLED INTO my driveway that Sunday morning in November and glanced at the clock on the dashboard; 5:15. I had just returned from my second full week of bowhunting. I hunt in Greene County, and the 250-mile trip from my home in Lancaster County can be extremely tiring. Each year for the past several I have hunted the first week of the archery season, and then either the fifth or last week, depending on my work schedule and by monitoring the rut. Those last two weeks are hard to beat for buck activity.

When I take these trips I stay at a campground and sleep in my van. Considering the time required for hunting, I feel lucky if there is enough time in a day to prepare a meal or take a shower. Fortunately, the campsite does have an electrical outlet, so I carry a small microwave oven and an electric coffee pot. The windup alarm clock is set for 4:15. The coffee pot turned on and a pre-packaged breakfast is thrown into the microwave, and I'm in my treestand by 6 a.m. or earlier. I spend all day in the woods, too.

It was good to be back home, and I was looking forward to sleeping in my own bed instead of cuddling up to the spare tire in my van. On the long drive home, though, I was burdened with thoughts of how I wanted to share the incredible events that had occurred during this latest hunt. First of all, during the first week of the archery season I filled both of my antlerless tags. Getting a buck, though, was another story. Little did I know that I was about to get a reality check, and in a big way.

I've talked to hunters who have never even seen a buck in the woods, and I have a good friend who just recently, after 63 years of hunting, finally took his first buck, a 9-point. Perseverance pays off. During that next to the last week of the 2002 season I saw more than 100 antlerless deer and 19 different bucks. Now, I'll take you through each of those six days, being as brief as I can, because dwelling on these events still leaves me in a state of disbelief.

Monday I hunted all day and saw more than 30 does and 4 bucks. Around 4:30 a nice 6- or 8-point passed 30 yards away. My personal comfortable shooting distance is 25 yards, but hey, I had just bagged two deer four weeks earlier and never had to track one.

Tuesday was relatively uneventful, but I did see another buck and 24 does. It started to rain during the evening hunt, and the forecast was calling for heavy rain through the night until noon on Wednesday. Lying in my sleeping bag and listening to the rain pelting the van roof, I slept like a baby. The next morning my friend Frank, who was also along and sleeping in his van, and I decided to go for breakfast in town.

I headed back out at 1 p.m. My treestand was in an elm tree near a heavily used deer trail. Around 3 o'clock I spotted a big buck heading my way. A piece of cake, I thought.

A 15-yard broadside. A double-lunger and the deer would go at most 40 or 50 yards. The $1,132 I had spent to upgrade my archery gear was about to pay off. Wrong!

The buck turned off the trail and moved away. I grabbed my grunt call, but before I could use it, the buck turned and headed back in my direction. What a relief. At the rate he was moving, he would cross my path in about two minutes. I clutched my bow and started to attach my release when I realized that I was still holding the grunt call. I reached over to place the call back on the branch, but it got caught and made a *twang*.

The buck stopped. Surely he couldn't hear that. He looked to the right, then left, and then my worst fear became a reality, I watched as the buck turned and disappeared over a hill. I was dejected, but finished the day in the stand. Several more does passed by and a buck that didn't meet antler restrictions.

After a restless night I was up at 4:15 and in my stand at a different location by 6 o'clock. During the morning I saw four bucks that were either not in range or did not meet antler restrictions, and several more does, but the evening hunt produced more excitement.

After changing locations and settling into my portable treestand I heard a crashing noise and spotted a 6-point chasing a doe down a hill. They ran past my stand and out of sight. The action certainly put me on alert, and after only a minute or so the same buck and doe ran by again. When the buck chased the doe under my stand I grunted on my call. The buck stopped



about 25 yards away and in the open. My adrenaline flowing, I knew the buck would bolt, so I pulled back the bow, and without taking my usual time to settle in for the shot, I let the arrow fly. It sailed just under the buck's belly. The buck strolled away — and I experienced another long walk to the van.

Friday was better. I didn't miss, but only because I didn't shoot. I did see four more bucks and several does. Frank left for home, and on Friday evening my brother Bill showed up. I went over the events of the week with Bill and we got into a conversation about bowhunting techniques. Bill said that when on stand you should always hold your bow. I respectfully disagreed, suggesting that it's better to hang your bow on a branch or hook within easy reach. This way you do not become cramped or fatigued from holding the bow for hours, and you have more freedom of movement to watch your entire hunting area. That subject of that conversation would come back to haunt me the next day.

Saturday, because of work, was my last chance to bag a buck. The morning went as usual, with many does passing by and three bucks out of range, and then I changed locations for the evening hunt.

Deciding to go for broke, I set up in a small meadow where I had been seeing deer all week. I had been avoiding this area only because it lacked good trees to climb with a portable treestand. There were a few scrubby trees and I found one that, because of all the limbs, I was able to climb the old fashioned way and then pull up my treestand with a rope. I attached my stand and got settled in, hanging my bow on a branch. The deer, I figured, would be traveling from the bottom of the meadow to the top and eventually out to a grassy field to feed. Three or four of the thick scrubby trees were in front of me, but presented no problem, because the deer would be coming up behind me and offer a perfect quartering away shot.

You guessed it. A nice buck came out of the brush 30 feet away and walked directly at me. I shouldn't have moved, but automaticaly I reached for my bow. The buck saw the movement and looked up. I was busted. I could have made that shot with my eyes closed if I had been holding my bow. While I struggled to grab my bow the buck bolted. I had to fight back the tears, but things went from bad to worse.

For the next hour I considered what had happened and that I had to become a better bowhunter. I had to be more disciplined, pay more attention to details, but then my thoughts were interrupted by three does entering the meadow from the woods. They immediately stopped to feed right under my tree. I was determined not to move.

After 15 minutes the largest doe let out a tremendous snort that frightened the other deer away. The big doe stood motionless for another 10 minutes. I heard grunting coming from the direction that the doe was staring, but I couldn't move.

My heart was pounding, my breathing strained, my eyes watered, and then the silence was broken when a massive buck ran right toward the doe. She ran for the woods with the buck in pursuit. I finally got a good look at the buck, which had 10 points, maybe 12, on its heavy rack. I grunted and the buck stopped 25 yards away. I pulled my bow to full draw and put the sight pin right behind his shoulder. I thought of how this buck would make my 9-point from the year before look small, but a tiny branch I hadn't seen deflected my arrow. A clean miss.

When I walked in the house that next morning after returning home it felt warm and cozy. It was good to be home, I thought. Maybe I'd get some rest — and then clean my rifle. □

The Long Island Boys



By Rodney Mee
Tioga County WCO

With a bountiful array of wildlife and relatively untamed forests, Pennsylvania is a dream playground for outdoor enthusiasts from all over. For some, however, the wildness gives rise to selfish ambitions.

DURING THE WINTER of 2003-04, as a new officer here, I was still adjusting to this sparsely populated district. I had transferred from York County, where it's hard for anybody to do anything without someone watching, which led to many tips. That's not the case here. Information is harder to come by, and being relatively new to the area, I did not have a strong communication network.

The winter would show signs, though, that I was beginning to make some headway. One Sunday in February my family and I were at church when an acquaintance approached. "Rodney, I need to talk to you."

He said that during the hunting season a deer and a bear had been poached near the little town of Stony Fork, on land owned by a Mr. Kricket. Turned out, I had helped Mr. Kricket with a nuisance bear problem the year before. My visit with him was pleasant and I was able to help him solve his bear problems. And because he was so concerned about doing what was right at that time, I found it hard to believe that he would be involved in any sort of poaching.

Without any real details to go on, I paid Mr. Kricket a visit. He greeted me warmly and invited me in.

"Mr. Kricket, I've been investigating a case involving a bear and a deer being illegally killed, and the evidence is pointing to your property. I find it hard to believe that you would be involved, but I'm wondering if you know of any such thing going on here."

With a great sigh of relief, Mr. Kricket began, "My son-in-law, Mick, was hunting here with his son-in-law, James, and James' twin brother and some friends. They built treestands in my woods and went hunting on the first day of deer season. I was in the house, listening to them on my radio when I heard they had shot a bear. I knew it wasn't bear season and I was furious."

Mr. Kricket went on to describe how the group used his ropes and other items to drag out a 300-pound female bear and hang it in his garage. He said that later that same week one of the younger hunters, with a light, shot a large buck, but not on his property.

As I was leaving, I gave Mr. Kricket my phone number and asked him to call me if he received any more information.

I barely got back to my office before my phone rang. It was Mr. Kricket, and he had just spoken with his son-in-law, Mick, and Mick wanted to talk to me. The next morning I interviewed Mick at his kitchen table, with his wife and daughter chiming in when they had something to offer. Given the seriousness of the violations, Mick seemed overly cooperative. As the interview progressed, it became apparent that there was major friction between Mick's household and his son-in-law, James Maddon, and his gang of friends.

Mick said that on the first day of deer season he, James, James' twin brother, Barry, and Matt Soda went

deer hunting on Mr. Kricket's property. Mick told everyone that Tioga County was included in the extended bear season. So, when a bear walked near James, he radioed everyone that he was going to take the shot. Once the bear was down they all dragged it out of the woods.

Later that day, Tommy Quill, a friend of the Maddon twins, showed up and helped to load the bear onto a trailer. Apparently, before the bear was loaded up, James Maddon realized that the temporary bear tag on his general hunting license was not valid, because he hadn't purchased a bear stamp. Mick said he would tag the bear, because he was the only one in the bunch who had a bear license. The group took the bear back to the Mick's residence and then searched the Internet to find a location in a wildlife management unit where bear hunting was permitted during the first week of deer season, to put down as a kill site for the bear.

In our interview, Mick made it sound as though he got involved only to shield his son-in-law. After all, he was the one who had led the others to believe that bears were legal game that day, so he should be the one to take the bear to the check station.

With Mick's written statement about the bear, and a list of all who were involved, I asked Mick about the deer. Mick, along with his wife and daughter, went on to describe how Barry Maddon and Tommy Quill went out at night and shot a big buck, brought it back to Mick's house and hid it under a tarp on Mick's trailer. I collected dried blood from the trailer for DNA analysis and then left with what I thought was a good case.

James and Barry Maddon, and Matt Soda and Tommy Quill all lived on Long Island, New York, so I contacted the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). If the deer had been taken across state lines, a Federal Lacy Act violation had occurred. Lieutenant Huss, Officer Otterstdt and a couple other DEC officers arranged to interview the suspects at James Maddon's home.

When the officers arrived they were met with a barrage of protests. The Long Island boys were mad at being "ratted out" and retaliated against Mick. They all gave written statements describing how Mick had also killed a bear, a cub, right after James shot the big female. Because only Mick had a bear license, and because the cub was so small, they just left it in the woods. Tommy and Barry (the deer suspects) both denied that the deer had been killed illegally.

When I received the statements and the DEC officers' accounts, I was skeptical, especially because they denied that the deer had been taken illegally. Things were getting messy, with a lot of finger pointing going on.

By late March the snow had finally melted enough for me to investigate the scene of the bear killing. I was especially anxious to see if I could find any signs of a second bear being killed. After locating everyones' treestands I began my search. With the snow less than a foot deep I figured I could find signs of some sort of animal activity near a carcass or other remains.

Searching around John Maddox's stand I came across a patch of matted down weeds covered with snow. I quickly dug down and pulled up a handful of bear remains. This had to be where the female was killed, I figured. Now all I needed was to find the cub. After combing the area for hours with no further success, I began to wonder if the cub was just a fabrication of the Long Island boys to take the spotlight off the deer case.

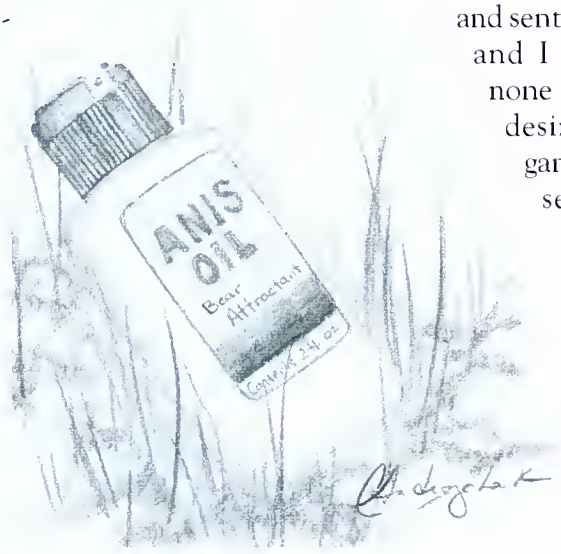
April came, and with no snow on the ground, I went back to look for the cub.

Within 10 minutes I noticed a pile of limbs near Mick's stand, and there it was, about a 60-pound male cub. I photographed the carcass and marked the loca-

tion with a GPS.

To no surprise, I also found that the treestands had been baited with liquid mineral deer attractant, a type of bait used because it supposedly can't be detected by "game wardens." I also found anis oil bottles. With anis being a bear attractant, the violations were stacking up. It was becoming more and more apparent that these guys were not guilty of just momentary lapses in judgment. This growing amount of evidence clearly indicated a premeditated, grossly illegal hunt. It was time to pay Mick another visit.

This time my supervisor, Ron Stout, came to help. Ron had checked the 300-pound bear when Mick Simons and James Maddon brought it to the Northcentral Region Office during the late bear season.



At the time Ron sensed something was out of place. He noticed that Maddon didn't come to the back of the truck to watch the bear being processed, something most every hunter is anxious to see. Ron also thought it odd that Simons brought the bear to the Northcentral Region Office instead of a check station in the extended bear season zone. At this point, Ron was glad to get a second chance to test his intuition.

Mick brought his wife along to the interview, which I thought was strange, but later would realize that he had no real choice. Before we even got started Mick stopped us and said, "There's something else I haven't told you about the bear."

I responded with a rather suppressed, "Okay."

Mick went on, "My wife didn't even know about this until today, before we came, but there was a second bear." Mick's wife glared at him, seemingly driving him to tell us the whole truth. Mick said that he got excited when he heard James Maddon shoot and saw the cub running toward him. He thought it was the same bear James had shot at and just started shooting. Afterward, when it became obvious what had happened, he had the others hide the cub and swore everyone to secrecy.

We finished the interview and sent Mick home. Ron and I concluded that none of them had any desire to follow the game laws or had any second thoughts about destroying two magnificent animals, leaving one to rot in the woods. Further, Mick obviously wasn't the responsible elder he purported to be, but rather the ringleader.

One thing was left, the deer. New York DEC had confiscated the deer head of the buck from a taxidermist on the reasonable suspicion of it being illegally taken at night, but we needed more to make the arrest.

Then, in late April, I received two phone calls. One from Tommy Quill, wanting his deer back, and the other from James Maddon's wife, Linda, wanting to know what was going on. They both told me that the deer tag for Tommy's buck had been filled out by Linda, because Tommy couldn't read or write. Linda didn't hunt, and definitely was not with Tommy when he killed the deer. The deer wasn't tagged at the place of kill, was trans-

ported unlawfully back to the Simons' residence, where Linda filled out the tag for Tommy, and then taken to New York.

We had them, federally speaking: The deer had been handled unlawfully in this state and then transported out of state. We did not need anything more to file charges.

I contacted Lee Schneckenberger of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to inform him of the violations. Lee set up an interview with Tommy Quill and Barry Maddon. In the meantime, I filed charges for the bear against all the Long Island boys, as well as Rick for taking two bears — the cub and for aiding in possession of the female bear.

Lee was able to get only Tommy to talk to him; Barry always seemed to be busy. Tommy, however, wouldn't come to reason on the deer. He tried to get Tommy to understand how much greater a federal misdemeanor or felony would be if he did not take care of the deer charges in Pennsylvania. Tommy's response was, "I'll take my chances." (Generally, the USFWS prefers to see these types of cases settled in the states where they occurred.) Lee decided to let us take care of the deer charges, because Tommy was coming to Pennsylvania for his hearing on the bear.

The rest of the Long Island boys weren't happy with the charges either, and took hearings for the aiding in possession of bear charges. On the hearing day all the Long Island boys showed up ready to fight the bear charges. Only James Maddon and Mick Simons pled guilty. The hearings became heated, and at one point the judge was ready to throw Tommy Quill out of the courtroom if he did not control himself. Then, between hearings, the county sheriff nearly threw Tommy out of the courthouse for disorderly conduct. I supported the officials in their quest to regain order, but I needed to press Tommy one more time about the deer before he left. The sheriff was reluctant, but gave Tommy another chance to behave.

Three hours later, District Justice Sweet found all the Long Island boys guilty of all charges. The fines and restitution was $7,700. He gave the Long Island boys the benefit of the doubt and allowed them to set up payment plans.

Our celebration was short-lived because we still had the deer case to settle with Tommy and Barry. Before they left for home I made one last attempt to encourage them to settle the deer case in Pennsylvania and avoid federal charges. To my surprise, they said they would talk to me. We ventured back into the courthouse and found an empty room to meet in. WCO Supervisor Rick Macklem was with me that day, because he was the one who had confiscated the bear from the taxidermist. Rick did a great job laying out the options, and was a big help in appealing to the two poachers. Tommy was still reluctant to talk, but Barry was ready to put the whole thing behind him, especially with federal charges looming. They gave us the whole story, or at least most of it. We had enough to file another $1,400 in fines for the two. It was time to put the case to rest.

The Long Island boys will be receiving three to five years revocation on top of the fine. At the time of this writing, though, the Long Island boys had defaulted on their payments, and warrants had been issued for their arrest. Because Tommy and Barry did not respond to their deer charges, I withdrew them to allow USFWS agent Lee Schneckenberger to file federal Lacey Act felony charges. Lee and U.S. Assistant Attorney Lara Gatz were able to enter a plea bargain with Tommy and Barry of one count of Federal Lacey Act Misdemeanor. They were sentenced to pay $822 each for the deer violations and pay the balance of the bear charges, with all the monies going to the Pennsylvania Game Fund. □

Beginning to See the Forest for the Trees

By Lori D Richardson
Wildlife Education Specialist

IMAGINE a landscape of forested mountains, clear flowing streams, a fantastic array of trees, shrubs and wildflowers, wildlife of all varieties; a place where the beauty of natural balance prevails; a place where the community, the landowners and the land users work together to facilitate this balance; a place where local ingenuity, a strong connection to the land and voluntary stewardship have combined for the benefit of these people and their paradise. Sound far-fetched? Not if you hunt or live near the 74,000-acre Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative (KQDC) in northwest McKean County, where such a landscape has been in the works since 1998.

Folks in Bradford have a history of being forward thinkers. During the oil rush of the early 19th Century, deciding to guarantee their water supply, the townfolk built the precursors to what's now the Heffner Reservoir. They valued the resource, they knew it was important and they knew it was possible to spoil it. So they set aside a share of land in the watershed and protected it, thus ensuring an ample supply of clean water for their community long into the future. Now they are protecting their forests, their livelihood and their recreational traditions.

When Native Americans occupied this part of the state, it is thought that deer densities were between 8 and 15 deer per square mile. As the area was settled, hunting pressure increased. Then, during the late 1800s and early 1900s the forests were cut, in what some described as the "highest degree of forest utilization that the world has ever seen." At first, deer were nearly wiped out, but the young, regenerating forests created ideal habitat for deer, and by the 1920s, farmers and foresters were complaining. The first doe season was held in 1923 to address what had become an overabundant herd.

Over the years, high deer density "hot spots" have plagued farmers, foresters and, as it turns out, the very habitat that supports the deer in the first place. Which brings us to the predicament we're in today — a forest incapable of supporting the number of deer it once did, because they've, very simply, eaten themselves out of house and home.

Enter the KQDC — a group of private and public landowners, hunters, local businessmen, scientists and government personnel who've come together to improve the quality of both the habitat and the hunting in this region. They've joined forces as the result of a common cause — issues with the deer herd. The landowners, in this case owners of large tracts of land managed for forest products, are unable to regenerate a diverse forest without the use of expensive fences, herbicides and fertilizers to combat the impacts of overbrowsing by deer. The hunters (locals and others from as far away as Pittsburgh, Erie, Ohio and New York) want larger, healthier deer with large



This INDIAN CUCUMBER plant stood about a foot tall and the root was as big around as my little finger and about half as long.

antlers; they want to see them, and they want access to them. The local businessmen want to keep sportsmen coming to the area, for vacations, scouting trips and hunting excursions. Scientists and government personnel want a healthy forest in balance with a healthy deer herd. Seven years ago, this unconventional assembly was brought together by the Sand County Foundation to try a new, concerted approach to improving the quality of both the habitat and the herd — and it's working.

There are currently five landowners in the KQDC partnership: Allegheny National Forest, Bradford Water Authority (BWA), Collins Pine Company, RAM Forest Products and Forest Investment Associates. Their objectives are to produce high-value sawtimber, protect water quality, provide wildlife habitat, enhance biodiversity, maintain sustainable forest productivity, and reduce the costs of forest regeneration. (Deer deterrents can cost up to $800 per acre, for timber that may not be harvested for 80 years.)

The landowners know they can't meet their objectives without managing deer, so they've actively sought the cooperation of the hunting community and opened their combined acreage to public hunting. The idea is that healthy deer exist in healthy habitat and, therefore, a partnership between hunters and habitat managers is required. The land managers depend on hunters to keep deer densities at levels appropriate for the habitat, and the hunters depend on land managers to provide quality habitat for deer.

The KQDC landowners continue to involve and engage the community. Each year volunteers monitor the deer herd through pellet count surveys, roadside daylight counts and harvest check stations. Many of the volunteers are hunters or employees of the KQDC landowners.

Every winter the KQDC hosts an appreciation banquet and raffle for sportsmen who hunted the KQDC and brought their deer to one of the KQDC check stations. Every two years, researchers supervised by the U.S. Forest Service Forestry Sciences Laboratory conduct a detailed analysis of 142 vegetation plots to assess forest health. Public meetings and hands-on educational seminars such as Deer Density and Carrying Capacity workshops are held regularly and an educational demonstration area is currently being planned.

All of these efforts are designed to engage the hunters and the community in the quest for better habitat, better hunting and a better deer herd.

With the data they've gathered, the KQDC leadership team is starting to see trends in the herd and the habitat. For instance, they estimate that over winter, the average deer density in 2005 was 14 deer per square mile, down from 24 in 2004 and 28 in 2003. Their goal is an average of 15 to 18, which they believe is appropriate to

sustain diverse mixed forests. Densities do, however, vary with habitat and topography and some areas have reached desired density levels.

Since the 3-point regulations took effect, most bucks harvested are in the 2½-year age class rather than yearlings, as was the case in the past. Buck body weights have increased slightly from 115 to 119 pounds, but are still short of the KQDC goal of 140 to 150 pounds. Antler spread, number of points and beam diameter also increased with the 3-point rule. Impact on the forest from deer browsing was less in 2004 than the previous two years and a detectable improvement of habitat conditions is anticipated for 2005.

I was lucky enough to spend a day in this beautiful part of the state with some of the KQDC leadership team. I saw firsthand the effects of overbrowsing, the methods used to confront it, and the excitement in these land managers' faces when they saw increasing diversity and regeneration outside the deer exclosure fences.

In the morning I met with some of the key players in forming this partnership. Dave deCalesta is a retired Forest Service scientist who currently works as a consulting wildlife biologist; he analyses and manages the KQDC deer data. Scott Reitz is a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service and coordinates KQDC activities with the Allegheny National Forest. Tim Pierson is an Extension Educator and Forester with Penn State Cooperative Extension and was the Coodinator of the KQDC for its first five years. Susan Stout works for the U.S. Forest Service Foresty Sciences Laboratory. Game Commission WCO Rose Luciane and LMO John Dzemyan have been involved since the early stages of the cooperative and serve as liaison between the KQDC and the PGC.

Later, in the field, we met up with Ken Kane, a forestry consultant for Bradford Water Authority, and Blaine Puller, the Forest Manager for Collins Pine Company.

I was absolutely impressed with the vast amount of knowledge, skill and scientific background in the group, but mostly I was moved by how their collective passion for natural resources brought them together in a collaboration so enthusiastic about involving and engaging hunters and the community in their management efforts.

As our caravan ventured onto the dusty back roads of the KQDC, Susan Stout explained that landowners wooing hunters, trying to encourage them to hunt on their properties, is a relatively new phenomenon. Engaging hunters as a management tool is the result of a new land management approach called *adaptive management* in which managers make predictions, implement management strategies based on those predictions, monitor the response to those strategies, and revise their predictions accordingly in an ongoing process.



The effects of deer browse: KEN KANE holds the branch of a 10-year-old cherry tree grown inside a deer exclosure fence on the Allegheny National Forest, it stands over five feet tall. In his other hand is a 10-year-old cherry tree that struggled to survive outside the fence nearby.

Additional support and funding come from: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Sand County Foundation, Allegheny National Forest Vacation Bureau, Penn State Cooperative Extension, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Bradley Fund for the Environment, Heinz Foundation, Budwieser, Buckmasters and many local businesses and clubs that provide raffle prizes for the annual appreciation banquet.

BWA has been using adaptive management since before it was even a term. The 11,800-acre parcel that is part of the KQDC was closed to hunting until 1988, when it opened to foot access only. The land managers predicted that hunters could help them control the impacts of browsing deer and subsequently opened the land to public hunting.

In the early '90s, the property was severely overbrowsed, with up to 60 deer per square mile, and lowering the herd was critical to BWA's land management. So, the authority opened its gates to vehicles during hunting season, and in 1992, when three feet of snow fell the night before opening day, plowed its roads so hunters could get in.



ANF Wildlife Biologist BRAD NELSON weighs a nice buck at one of the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative check stations.

BWA is still adapting its management strategies. In recent years it created color-coded maps to help keep hunters from getting lost in the maze of roads created by timber practices and gas and oil development. They also direct hunters to the "hot spots" by noting high deer density areas on the maps.

"We're just elated," Ken Kane explained. "We're beginning to see more diversity and regeneration outside the fences in areas where there is good hunter access."

Farther down the road, in a recent regeneration cut, Stout pointed out red maple seedlings, then an Indian cucumber plant and lots of little Indian cucumbers spreading out along the ground. There were also trilliums dotting the forest floor. Seeing these favored deer foods growing "outside the fence" lit up Stout's face. LMO Dzemyan tugged carefully at an Indian cucumber to extract the whole root and invited me to taste it. What a treat: It really does taste like cucumber.

Stout told me that hunters would benefit by gaining insight into the intricacies of forest management. For instance, sometimes foresters have to use herbicides to eliminate plants that interfere with the growth of desirable tree seedlings, then follow up with a light thinning to stimulate the germination of seedlings in the area now cleared of interfering plants. If successful, this practice will improve local hunting because deer browse will be plentiful. As the stand ages, the growing trees will begin to shade out deer food in the understory and hunters will want to move on to other areas where management practices have created lots of browse.

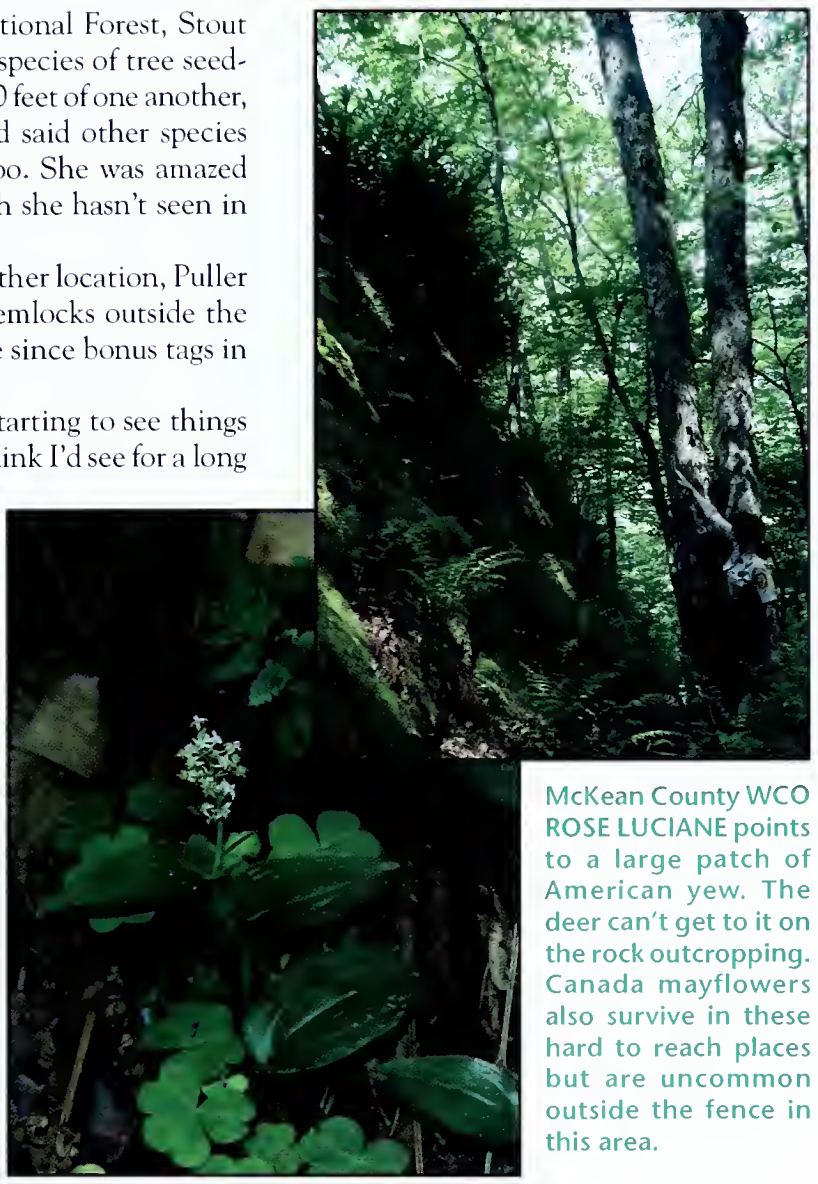
The KQDC hopes to be more effective in gaining diversity with adaptive management than with deer-proof fencing. On an

area of Allegheny National Forest, Stout quickly identified six species of tree seedlings growing within 10 feet of one another, outside the fence, and said other species were growing there too. She was amazed at this diversity, which she hasn't seen in years.

As we drove to another location, Puller said, "We're seeing hemlocks outside the fence for the first time since bonus tags in the early '90s."

Reitz added, "I'm starting to see things in the forest I didn't think I'd see for a long time. The health, vigor and abundance of species is improving."

The efforts of the cooperative are making a difference. Habitat is recovering and a healthy deer herd in balance with its environment is on the way. In fact, the KQDC dramatically reduced the number of DMAP coupons it requested this year, working to focus hunting on a few specific areas that continue to have too many deer.



McKean County WCO ROSE LUCIANE points to a large patch of American yew. The deer can't get to it on the rock outcropping. Canada mayflowers also survive in these hard to reach places but are uncommon outside the fence in this area.

The KQDC continues to reach out to sportsmen for their cooperation, assistance and support. They taught me a new term — QHE, *quality hunting ecology* — it means that hunters are aware of the ecological relationship between the herd and the habitat and that they understand that they, as hunters, are also land managers. It reminded me that the key to the continued recovery of this forest and its deer herd is the continued cooperation of these landowners, the local community and the sportsmen who hunt this paradise.

Seven years ago, this unconventional assembly of dedicated conservationists embarked on a mission to improve the quality of the habitat, the hunting and the herd. Today, the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative is a model for other communities to emulate; their mission is noble, and it's working. □

Sand County Foundation is a private foundation that facilitates innovative management partnerships and draws its name from renowned sportsman and conservationist Aldo Leopold's famous collection of essays titled *A Sand County Almanac.*



PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by

Bob Sopchick

Big Medicine

THICK PATCHES OF FOG, draped like horse blankets over the swaybacked ridges, shift and slide throughout the day while ragged curtains of rain and sleet sweep across the uplands. Partway up the ridge, a hunting camp sits on the lip of a small flat. Inside it is warm and steamy. A large pressure cooker chatters on the stove, lending a nervous air to the charged conversation of bear hunters eager for the evening meal and the hunt to come.

Bear season had been closed the previous year. Lamented at first, the hunters are feeling that the 1971 season will be productive as there was lots of sign on the terraced oak flats above camp. Plans are reviewed over steaming plates of ham, green beans and potatoes. They would put on drives the first day of the season, and on the second, hunt alone.

Later that evening the long plank table is heaped with gear as they make ready. Young Art Morrow, a new member of the camp and to bear hunting, thumbs cartridges into the loops of a leather cartridge wallet he had made. Being deskbound at his new job since graduating from college, he is especially eager for the rigors of the hunt.

"Nice cartridge holder," said Eddie. "But those are some awfully small bullets for black bear. I moved up to 250-grainers for my .350 Magnum. What are you using?"

"A .257 Roberts with 117-grain soft points. I've shot six deer with it. Do you think it's potent enough for bears?"

"Just take a look at the gun rack," said Eddie, pointing with his chin.

Art studied the row of rifles in the anteroom off the kitchen. The first three were Remingtons; a pair of .30-06 pumps and Eddie's .350 Magnum with its laminated stock. Two Model 99 Savages were from different eras; one, a new .358, the other, a straight gripped .38-55. Next was a brush-scarred Marlin carbine in the venerable .35 Remington. His own Model 70 featherweight was sandwiched between two other Winchesters; a .348 Model 71 and a silvery Model 1895 in .405, with a bore like a stovepipe.

"Don't let Eddie kid you," said John, oldest member of the camp. "Your Roberts is plenty of gun."

John took the .405 from the rack, flicked the lever, then eased the hammer down and handed it to Art. "This one's mine. 'Big Medicine,' that's what Teddy Roosevelt called

the .405 he used in Africa."

Art nestled the crescent butt plate into his shoulder, found the bead in the buckhorn sight and centered it on a pine knot on the wall that had the vague shape of a running bear. "What size bullet?"

"The 300-grain round nose is the classic choice. It can get the notice of a charging lion or cape buffalo. The year we built the camp I took a bear with it up in Washtub Hollow. It come out of the laurel like a runaway locomotive, and when I shot he hit the ground and skidded down the embankment nose first into the creek.

"Now listen, Art, I know guns and I know hunters, and I sense that a splinter of doubt is starting to fester in your head. I've seen a Colorado bull elk pile right up with one shot from a Roberts. Eskimos shoot polar bears with .222s — a woodchuck round. When it comes to the moment of truth, doubt is a bad thing. You can have no doubt about your ability to make a killing shot and that your rifle is up to the task. If you'd like, you can borrow Big Medicine here and I'll use your 257."

"I appreciate your offer, but I can't. Besides, I'm not familiar with your rifle and I'd have doubts about my ability to shoot it well."

"You're right," said John. "But the offer stands in case you change your mind."

THE FOG PERSISTED high on the ridges, so the hunters spent the morning by driving out a series of swamps. On the last drive before lunch Art was out on the flank, pushing out a dense swath of laurel between two huge windfalls. When he came out on a slight rise he heard something running before him, saw the brush quiver in its passage, and looked for the white flash of a deer tail. Not half a minute later he heard the roar of a shot from John's position, then hurried ahead.

"Big bear, Big Medicine," said John, smiling broadly. The bruin was piled up against a boulder. Art shook John's hand, and felt the nervous quake of excitement in the veteran hunter's grip. Art ran his fingers through the thick, bituminous black pelt, studied the wide paws, the creases like a maize of trails on the pads. It was a handsome bear, with a small white blaze on its chest like a brilliant solitary star in an endless void.

It took the gang the rest of the afternoon to pull the bear from the bowels of the swamp. They hung it on the game pole and guessed it to be around 350 pounds.

That night at dinner Eddie told how he had almost shot a cub. "It was running full tilt, 30 yards away, and I swear it was a full grown bear. I was leading him like a grouse and was about to shoot when he slowed and I saw that he was just a young one."



"I guess I have the right rifle for that job, if they ever make cubs legal," said Art.

"There he goes again," said John, slapping the table. "Take old Big Medicine tomorrow. I'll be sleeping in."

THE NEXT MORNING the hunters headed their solitary ways in the dark. They would meet back at the camp for a late lunch, then clean up and head for home.

John had suggested a rugged bit of ground for Art to check out for Monday's deer opener. Art took the switchback trail up the mountain, then angled far to his left



where the mountain curved around. He found a small flat of towering oaks and grape tangles that overlooked a reef of laurel and settled into a windfall. It was very quiet, save the occasional splat of water drops. A doe slipped across the flat, ears back, followed by a forkhorn, and a few minutes later, an 8-point. This would definitely be his stand come Monday, he thought.

Swirling winds pushed the raw, moist air, and the dampness crept beneath his coat and seeped through the skin, settling into muscle and marrow. He shivered and decided to still-hunt along the edge of the laurel, stalking along while warmer blood pumped through his veins.

It was as if he were in a dream when, like a black tide, a bear poured over the ridge, its hide rippling over inches of fat and muscle. It stopped behind a screen of scrub oak. Art frantically searched for an opening. The bear swung its head right and left then took a few steps and paused again behind a thicket of small birch saplings.

Art stood stock-still. The wind was in his favor, but the bear sensed something was wrong. It stared through the saplings the way a caged bear might stare through bars. This, however, was a wild creature confined only by the boundaries of a great forest; it knew freedoms no man could fathom, it's life a journey as raw and epoch as a meteor traveling through a nameless parcel of space.

The bear whirled and ran back uphill, angling slightly. Art tried to plant the thin crosshairs of the Weaver K 2.5 behind its shoulder, but the bear was moving fast. He wished he had borrowed Big Medicine, would have placed the bead at the end of the ribcage and let the big slug plow through. He shot just as the great black form went over a log and was swallowed up in the dense laurel. Art jacked the bolt back, wishing at that moment that he was somehow pulling the bullet back through the bore, bringing back that round fired from a dark chamber of doubt.

Art listened. Silence. Nothing. He stood there a long while.

A dark comma of earth showed where the leaves were thrown back when the bear dug in, accelerating at his shot. He found a few black hairs that he held between his fingers, twirling them nervously as he looked about for blood. The bear was on a well-used game trail. Fifteen yards ahead he found a spot of crimson, five steps farther, another, eight steps more a smear of blood on a laurel leaf a foot off the ground. He marked the spot with a piece of tissue and sat down.

He tried to remember exactly where the crosshairs were planted on the bear when he shot, but he could not halt that single frame in the blur of images. He followed the trail

through the thicket for some distance. The spots of blood gave out. The trail wrapped impossibly around the steep face of the mountain, and through the trees he could see the silver ribbon of a river far below. A raven sailed past at eye level. *Quork-quork*, it called as if beckoning him to follow, or perhaps it was warning its brother, the bear, that danger was right behind.

Art pressed on to the edge of a great sandstone escarpment. From there the game trail was little more than an inches wide line scribed through the rocks. A piece of foamy green moss broken off the edge of a rock might have been loosened by the bear, but for all he knew it could have been dislodged by a chipmunk.

He hoped that he had only grazed the bear. If hit high up, the blood would have to run over the barrel of the body and down through the thick fur, leaving little or no blood spoor. The wound would plug with fat, and with every other step the hide would cover it. The footing was treacherous and he was far from camp. He continued on and in places had to hold onto the root handles of yellow birch growing around rocks, like skeletal hands clinging tenuously to life on this precarious ground.

The escarpment was a warren of deep dark fissures, some connected to underground chambers. He shined his flashlight far into crevices, and while pausing near one he felt the air ushering gently out of the earth, the must of an older time on the expelled breath of the mountain. He wondered then if somewhere deep within the rocks the bear was breathing its last. It started to rain very hard, silvery sheets that slapped against the big rocks. He gave up the trail and returned to camp.

AT 56 YEARS of age, Art is the only remaining member at camp from that old crew. John had left him the Big Medicine rifle, and Art had used it on occasion for deer. For the first time in many years he managed to get bear season off, but only three other hunters came to camp that year.



Art cradled Big Medicine as he walked last in line with the other hunters down the long grassy road on top of the mountain, each dropping off at their respective stands. At the top of Washtub Hollow Art hung his pack on the stub of the tree and at first light sat on a rock slab with the rifle across his lap.

He stared at the pewtery slab-sided receiver, noticing it was the same hue as the wintry clouds that skimmed the treetops. A raven passed over, mirrored in the receiver. It erupted with its *kek-kek-kek* alarm call, as if urging him to look up.

The bear exploded across the hollow, and with the .405 on his shoulder, Art felt as if he were Roosevelt himself, looking ahead for an opening as a Cape buffalo crashed through an acacia thicket. The bear pivoted and offered a poor angle, almost identical to the one of yesteryear. Art felt the cold curve of the trigger against the first joint of his finger and began to squeeze, then hesitated.

He eased the hammer to safe, tucked the rifle stock under his arm and surveyed the sky and the woods. He sensed no rush of power or vault of ego by holding his shot; for a hunter is not a subsidiary deity even though he contends with life and death. He was only a hunter, an agent in an ages old progression, who's fortunate and wondrous path bisected, for one shining moment in this boundless woods, that of a great wild creature. That, he thought, was truly Big Medicine.

FIELD NOTES

Death Grip

Last fall we recovered the antlers from two bucks that died after getting their racks locked together. They are quite interesting, not only because they are huge, but also because they are locked in the opposite direction that they normally are. I'd like to thank Pat Martin from Butler who arranged for the skulls to be cleaned up, and now they'll be on display at the Pymatuning visitors center.

— LMO Jerry A. Bish, Conneaut Lake

Autographed

Berks — My kids and I were taking a walk with my nephew Tyler Schollenberger when Tyler picked up a spent shotshell hull. When he read the name on it aloud, "Remington," my daughter Rachael asked, "Do you know him?"

— WCO Bill Vroman, Bally

Thanks for the Dedication

Westmoreland — Deputy Frank Guerrier recently retired after serving the citizens of the commonwealth for more than 36 years. I, his fellow deputies, and all the staff in the Southwest Region will certainly miss Frank. He was always available to help and always professional in his dealings with hunters and trappers. As with all our deputies, Frank never received much recognition, but he never sought recognition. His motivation came from a dedication to the mission and a commitment to wildlife conservation. Besides, he truly enjoyed the work. Nobody does anything for 36 years if they don't like it, and as any deputy can tell you, they don't do this for the money. So, Frank, from a grateful WCO, thank you. Enjoy your retirement and don't forget to save me some tomatoes from your garden.

— WCO Thomas Fazi, Ligonier



Doesn't Even Wear a Mask

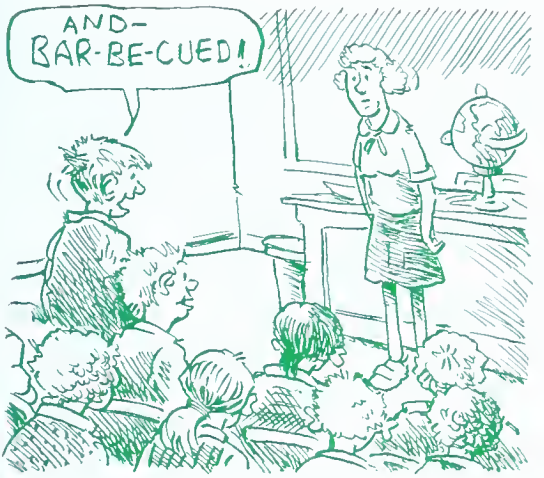
Crawford — My brother-in-law, Bill Kosciuszko, told me that he had just teed off on the 10th hole at a local golf course when he noticed a crow fly from the front of his cart. He soon discovered that his package of crackers had been torn open by the crow. A nearby golfer informed Bill that he was the latest victim of the No. 10-hole thief. She said that the crow is a fixture on the course, and that when the unsuspecting golfers go to tee off, the crow helps itself to whatever snacks are in the carts.

— WCO Mark A. Allegro, Meadville

Tragic

Wayne — I'd rather be writing an entertaining Field Note, but I thought I'd take this opportunity to remind hunters to be careful this season. In May I investigated a turkey hunting incident in which two hunters were hit with a heavy 12-gauge turkey load from a distance of only 18 yards. The two individuals were seriously injured and the shooter fled without rendering assistance. The shooter still hasn't been located, but several promising leads have developed.

— WCO Frank Dooley, Tyler Hill



Kids Don't Lie

MONTGOMERY — I accompanied my wife and 4-year-old son to a pre-Kindergarten testing and screening session. At one point the teacher asked the children questions about animals, and when she asked my son Mikey what his favorite animal was, he replied, "Deer." When she asked why, Mikey smiled, rubbed his tummy, and answered, "Because they are yummy." I smiled, my wife Johanna was embarrassed, and the teacher was very surprised. I don't think it was the answer she was looking for.

— WCO CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Safe Combination

LACKAWANNA — This year's spring gobbler season was a safe one in my district, which I attribute to hunters being more educated about turkey hunting safety and their compliance with the fluorescent orange regulations.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, TAYLOR

Says It All

BERKS — During gobbler season, near a popular hunting area, I stumbled onto a note that had been placed on a large rock with a stone on top to hold it in place. It read, "Please show some respect for other hunters. You entered the woods late and bumped four birds off the roost. You walked right into my area and did not notice me or my orange hat. Good Luck hunting and be courteous."

— DEPUTY LARRY GALLAGHER, HAMBURG

Slip of the Tongue

HUNTINGDON — Our dispatchers handle thousands of calls each year, so to say that things can get quite hectic is an understatement. Recently, while instructing a caller on how to deter bears from garbage, one dispatcher in our region office was overheard saying, "Just make sure you dot all your 'Ts' and cross your 'Is.' Keep up the good work, Terry.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

New Times

CHESTER — The first bald eagle nest in the district for some years successfully produced offspring, and the young bird fledged around June 18. The real significance of this is that the nest was near one of the more urban areas in the eastern part of the county.

— WCO SCOTT FREDERICK, SADSBURYVILLE

Fitting End

I'll bet that 41 years ago, when Roy "Whitey" Lerch began his career as a Deputy, he would have never guessed that his last day would be spent on a wild goose chase, literally. Whitey spent the whole morning helping wildlife management personnel round up and band Canada geese in Lehigh County. Thanks, Whitey, for a long dedicated and distinguished career protecting and conserving Pennsylvania's wildlife.

— LES CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Despicable

ADAMS — A man who had been drinking was riding his ATV through a farmer's fields, destroying crops, and then decided to chase down a deer. The young buck was seriously injured after running into a fence trying to escape, and then was finished off with a knife by the individual. A special thanks goes to Corporal Gary Baumgardner of the Conewago Township Police Department, who was first at the scene and notified the Game Commission.

— WCO D.J. DAVID, EAST BERLIN

Got Their Man

PERRY — Neighboring officer Jim Brown and I finally got a lead on an individual who had dumped a truckload of debris onto a parking lot at SGL 170. After knocking on the door at the suspect's home, a young man answered wearing a T-shirt with "Whatever It Is, I Didn't Do It" printed on it. Turned out, he was right, as it was his brother who was responsible.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Behind the Scene

After nearly 39 years of dedicated service Harry Hawthorne retired. Harry spent most of his career at the Eastern Game Farm, and when that closed he transferred to the Food & Cover Corps crew at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Harry had a tremendous work ethic and was always willing to do more than expected. If you visited Middle Creek over the past few years and noticed how well-kept the place is, remember Harry did it.

— LMO JAMES R. BINDER, KLEINFELTERSVILLE

Aerial Show

Eagle and osprey sightings are on the increase this year, with ospreys, especially, in the Lake Wilhelm area of Mercer County. Both of these magnificent birds provide some topnotch entertainment, especially when the fish aren't biting.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

By the Book

DAUPHIN — Deputies Troy Lehman and Barry Everly cited a man for setting pole traps, and on the day of the trial I could see that the two officers were well prepared. They were surrounded by notes, law books and photos, and I was impressed by the amount of preparation they had done. I was even more impressed after the trial, when Barry showed me more notes he had written on the palm of his hand. I'll have to issue Barry an extra notebook.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN

Do As I Say . . .

BERKS — At a HTE training workshop WCO Dave Brockmeier was teaching the instructors about classroom disturbances and things to avoid, such as cell phones. He explained that it was a good idea for instructors to turn off their phones at the start of the class. Unfortunately, though, a few minutes later, Dave's cell phone rang.

— DEPUTY DAN LYNCH, BOYERTOWN

Wrong Image

BUTLER — I was standing in the checkout line at the corner store in Prospect, buying some items for lunch, when a lady behind me said, "I just have to ask, is that a donut you're buying?" Laughing, I told her that it was just a sandwich, and she said, "That ruins that theory!" It's true; we don't always eat donuts, although I'll admit, it's hard to pass one up.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT



Heard Him Right

MCKEAN — When my husband mentioned that something was eating his deer, I thought he had meant to say that a deer was eating his garden plants and corrected him. He again said that something was eating his deer — his new archery 3-D deer target. Sure enough, there were large chunks chewed off the Styrofoam form. He was right, something was eating his "deer" — a porcupine.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, CUSTER CITY



City Invader

YORK — In June I had a bear in my district, which is not that unusual, as bears often travel through the county during the spring. However, I first sighted this bear in York City. Thanks to the efforts of local police officers the bear was driven out of the city, and later we tranquilized and moved it to a new residence many miles away.

— WCO CHAD R. EYLER, YORK

Rendezvous

CLEARFIELD — The state trapper's convention was held in Clearfield in June, and we manned a Game Commission display throughout the event. I was impressed by the spirit of the trappers and was surprised at the number of attendees from other states. If you are a trapper, or just enjoy the outdoors, make it a point to visit a trapper's convention.

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD

Happy Birthday

College interns Brian Neal and Jenna Koval were checking bear trap sites on SGL 42 near New Florence when in less than two hours and eight miles they saw a bobcat coming down the road in front of them carrying a rabbit, and then they noticed a porcupine, two does, each with twin fawns, a mature gobbler and two bears. All this, and on Brian's 25th birthday, too.

— WES JOSEPH V. STEFKO, GREENSBURG

Some Things Never Change

YORK — I was reading retired WCO Bill Bower's book *All the Men in Green* when I discovered two parallels from the early 1900s and today. One is that the game protectors/WCOs, no matter when they served, all thought that theirs was the best time to be a wildlife conservation officer. The other is that there has always been an opposition to change. Sportsmen in the early 1900s didn't like change any more than those today. The upside is that history shows that by the next generation the new ideas have been accepted, but on the downside, the new generation is not likely to favor any new changes, either.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Hope So

MCKEAN — Based on the number of grouse broods I saw here in the spring, the hunting should be better this fall.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY



Trick or Treat

CAMBRIA — A woman called saying that a bear had torn down her birdfeeders in the past, but now was into her garbage cans. She was perplexed as to why the bear had changed its habits. I asked what she had put in her garbage just before the bear had visited and she said her old Halloween candy.

— WCO LAWRENCE OLSAVSKY, HASTINGS

Joint Effort

PHILADELPHIA — On Memorial Day the Delaware River Port Authority Police Department requested my help with two peregrine falcon chicks that had made their way from the nest to the deck of the Walt Whitman Bridge. One falcon had been struck by a vehicle and the other was at its sibling's side, dodging traffic. The eastbound lane of traffic was blocked and the police needed me to recover the dead falcon and save the other. I radioed WCOs Erin Czech and John Pedrick from the Fish & Boat Commission, who were out on boat patrol. They docked their boat at the U.S. Coast Guard base near the bridge and helped recover the peregrines. The falcons were taken to wildlife rehabilitator Michelle Goodman, who returned the deceased bird and the healthy young male to the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife the next day, because that agency had banded the birds just five days earlier.

— WCO JERROLD CZECH JR., PHILADELPHIA

Hunkered Down

MONROE — I was conducting a firearms course for deputies on SGL 91, and after firing around 600 rounds I went to check on something moving in the brush not 20 feet from where we were shooting. Thinking rabbit I was surprised when two fawns took off.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Mama Wasn't Happy

FRANKLIN — We all know how dangerous getting between a female bear and her cubs can be, but while hunting during the spring gobbler season John Feldmeyer spotted a hen turkey feeding in a clearing he was walking across, and soon found himself between the hen and some poults. The mother hen became quite vocal and charged right at him. John managed to sidestep her and make a hasty retreat. The hen gathered her young and disappeared into some thick cover.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Good Advice

VENANGO — Recently, nine individuals were found guilty for unlawfully riding ATVs on SGL 39. One defendant said it was unfair that he had purchased an ATV and has no place to ride it. Maybe he should have thought of that before buying it.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, FRANKLIN



At Least He Feels Wanted

FAYETTE — Waterways Conservation Officer Scott Opfer is an avid and usually successful hunter. Early one morning during the spring gobbler season he couldn't resist the urge when two toms began gobbling up a storm in the woods near his home. After donning his camo and orange hat, he quietly eased into position and began calling. The gobblers were coming in and then a third joined in, and filling his tag seemed certain. It wasn't meant to be, however, as Scott's dog, Bubbles, had followed his master's trail from the house and was overjoyed to find him hiding in the brush. Bubbles raced right over, jumping and barking. It's great to be loved, huh, Scott?

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, UNIONTOWN

Always Good Advice

LYCOMING — Do us both a favor and read the *Hunting & Trapping Digest* you received with your hunting license. There are always some changes and new things.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT

Commission welcomes Hill and Schreffler



H. Daniel Hill III



David W. Schreffler

H. DANIEL HILL III of Erie County, and DAVID W. SCHREFFLER of Bedford County have been appointed to the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Hill is a self-employed attorney with a practice in the areas of business, estate planning and real estate law. He is also counsel to the law firm of McCarthy, Martone and Peasley in Erie. He is a member of Trout Unlimited, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and was a founding member of the Pennsylvania Flyfishing Museum. He is fulfilling the unexpired term of Robert J. Gilford until June 6, 2006.

Schreffler is a retired educator who manages agricultural and forestry activities on his family farm. He has more than 30 years of teaching experience as a secondary education adjunct professor at Millersville University.

He is a nationally recognized author of agricultural industry ordinances and speaks frequently in favor of agricultural preservation in Pennsylvania. Schreffler fills a seat previously held by Sam Dunkle and will serve a full 8-year term, until June 13, 2013.

The Board is comprised of eight members, one from each of eight geographical regions, and each member is nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

Dove and early Canada Goose: Sept 1

DOVE and early Canada goose seasons will open Sept. 1, kicking off Pennsylvania's 2005 migratory bird seasons.

"Pennsylvania's migratory bird hunting seasons will be very similar to last year's," said PGC executive director Vern Ross of the selection package forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dove hunters once again will have a triple-split season. Hunting the first season (Sept. 1-Oct. 1) will run from noon until sunset. The second and third splits will be Oct. 29-Nov. 26, and Dec. 26-Jan. 4, with hunting hours a half-hour before sunrise until sunset. In all three seasons, the daily bag limit will be 12 and the possession limit after opening day is 24.

The early statewide season for resident Canada geese will open Sept. 1,

and continue through Sept. 24. Statewide bag limits remain 8 daily and 16 in possession, which is the maximum allowed under the USFWS frameworks.

The Pymatuning Zone, which includes the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area in Crawford County, remains closed during the early season, as does SGL 46, which includes both the public and controlled hunting areas at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Lebanon-Lancaster counties.

"Last year, being able to increase bag limits for the early Canada goose season was another step forward in addressing the increasing nuisance and damage complaints caused by the growing resident Canada goose population in this area," said John Dunn, Game Commission biologist. This year, our statewide population estimate is 282,000, which is down slightly from last year's all-time high of 299,000."

Pennsylvania's woodcock season will open Oct. 15, and continue through Nov. 12. The daily limit of three, and six in possession after opening day, remains unchanged from last year's season. Virginia and sora rail hunting will run Sept. 1-Nov. 9. The daily and possession limits are three combined. The season for king and clapper rails is closed. Hunting for moorhens and gallinules will run from Sept. 1 to Nov. 9. The daily limit is three, and the possession limit is six. A season for common snipe will run from Oct. 15 to Nov. 19. The daily limit is eight, and the possession limit is 16.

A Youth Waterfowl Day will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24, for hunters ages 12-15. To participate a youngster must be accompanied by an adult, who may assist with calling, duck identification and other aspects of the hunt. Junior hunters may harvest ducks, mergansers, coots and moorhens.

In addition, because the Youth Waterfowl Day and the early Canada goose season overlap this year, youngsters and the adults accompanying them may harvest Canada geese, except for the Pymatuning Zone and SGL 46, where the Canada geese season is closed. The limit for the Youth Waterfowl Day for Canada geese is eight and for moorhens is three. Check **www. pgc.state.pa.us**, or watch the local news media for the duck, merganser and coot bag limits for the Youth Waterfowl Day.

Migratory game bird hunters, including those afield for doves and woodcock, are required to obtain and carry a migratory game bird license ($3 for residents, $6 for nonresidents), as well as a general hunting, combination or lifetime license. All waterfowl hunters age 16 and older also must possess a federal migratory game bird and conservation (duck) stamp.

PGC participating in multi-state dove banding study

THIS SUMMER marked the third year the Game Commission cooperated with 26 other dove hunting states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a nationwide mourning dove banding study. The objectives of this 3-year study are to determine dove harvest and survival rates, to ultimately improve mourning dove management.

Plans called for the banding of more

DOVE hunters should check for bands on any birds they bag, and report any they find using the toll-free number on the band. Pennsylvania and 26 other states are cooperating on a 3-year project designed to provide information on mourning dove harvest rates.



Lori Richardson

than 22,000 doves, from July 1 through mid-August. Pennsylvania's banding quota is 1,200 birds. Mourning doves were captured in wire ground traps at 24 locations statewide.

"We are publicizing the dove banding program to alert hunters to report banded doves using the toll-free telephone number on the band," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Wildlife Management Bureau director. "This information will enhance the data already gathered by federal and state agencies as they work to establish hunting seasons and bag limits for mourning doves."

Hunters who harvest a dove are encouraged to look for a band on the bird's leg and contact the toll-free number on the band.

Species of special concern receive special treatment

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners took preliminary steps to move the bald eagle from an endangered to a threatened species, based on its continued recovery in the commonwealth.

"It's heart-warming to know that bald eagles are once again flourishing in the commonwealth," noted John Riley, Board president. "It is something all Pennsylvanians should be proud of and a testament to what can be accomplished with a sound and comprehensive wildlife management program.

"But as pleasing as the bald eagle recovery is, there is still the somber reality that we just proposed the addition of five new species to the state endangered list. It's clear that much more needs to done. Unfortunately, insufficient funding is currently — and historically — limiting the agency's ability to give all wildlife species the management attention they need."



John Riley

The dickcissel, sedge wren and yellow-bellied flycatcher, all listed as threatened species for years, were proposed to be elevated to endangered species. In addition, the black-crowned night heron and blackpoll warbler, both species of special concern for some time, have been added to the state endangered species list.

The number of nests in Pennsylvania black-crowned night heron colonies has been declining for some time. But this spring, on the Susquehanna River's Wade Island — the state's largest black-crowned colony — there

were only 63 nests, a dramatic drop from last year's 128.

Great egrets, another state endangered species that also nests on the 3-acre island, did not experience a similar decline.

Blackpoll warblers nest in a very localized area of western Wyoming County. Their nesting in this area has been confirmed for 11 consecutive years. No more than 14 breeding pairs have ever been documented in any year in Pennsylvania. It was added to the state endangered species list in response to its low population and limited range.

Sedge wrens, dickcissels and yellow-bellied flycatchers are rare nesters here. Several neighboring states list sedge wrens as threatened or endangered species. All three species have been elevated to "endangered" from "threatened," to reflect the agency's growing concern for the welfare of these rare birds.

"Species of greatest conservation concern will continue to receive the best attention the agency can provide," noted Dan Brauning, Wildlife Diversity Section supervisor. "But it's recognized that some, such as the endangered yellow-crowned and black-crowned night-herons, aren't likely to experience significant population gains anytime soon."

The endangered species changes advanced by the Commissioners were recommended by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey's Ornithological Technical Committee.

Important wildlife projects approved

THE Commissioners approved four projects beneficial to nongame wildlife that will be financed through federal funding and contributions by conservation organizations.

The research projects will be funded primarily by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under its cost-sharing State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG). Private organizations finance the matching portion of the projects' overall costs as defined by the federal government. An advisory group, comprised of Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission staff, review and rank projects, and then secure Board of Commissioners approvals for selected projects.

The research projects are as follows:

Multi-Species Management Guidelines For Priority Barrens Habitats in Pennsylvania: This $37,012 project being spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy will develop a habitat management and decision-making tool for public and private land managers of the state's barrens habitats. This will help land managers identify barrens communities, understand how size, condition and landscape context affect long-term viability of barrens systems, summarize stresses and sources of stress affecting barrens, discuss management options appropriate for achieving management objectives, and best management practices for targeted species that depend on barrens systems.

From Birding to Environmental Review: Developing Data for Conservation Use: This $23,800 project being carried out by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will develop data from the Game Commission's bird data collectors into a format for entry into the Pennsylvania environmental review system, which, along with the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, will be used in the future as part of the state's en-

vironmental review of permits.

Multi-Species Habitat Profiles for Four Major Terrestrial Forest Types in Pennsylvania: This $64,925 project being undertaken by The Nature Conservancy will develop "multi-species habitat profiles" for four major terrestrial forest community types (northern hardwood, dry white pine-oak, dry oak-heath, and red oak-mixed hardwoods), including forest community and successional characterizations, current and best potential site community occurrence analysis, and small mammal survey and habitat profiles for the rock vole and northern water shrew.

Bat Hibernacula Gating: This $63,250 project being carried out by Sanders Environmental Inc. will protect hibernating bats in five caves and two mines by constructing bat-friendly gates at entrances. All sites are either historic Indiana bat hibernacula or in proximity to Indiana bat hibernacula. Gating will exclude people, while maintaining airflow and allowing unobstructed bat movement.

In other action, the Board:

- gave preliminary approval to a regulatory change that will allow furtakers to use up to No. 4 buckshot to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of shotgun loads they use.
- adopted a proposed amendment authorizing the executive director to designate dates outside of the statewide framework for deer seasons for special deer hunts at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.
- announced the next scheduled meeting of the Board will be held Oct. 2-4, at the agency's Harrisburg headquarters.

Board approves acquisition of nearly 940 acres

THE BOARD approved three proposals that will increase the State Game Lands system by nearly 940 acres.

Clarion County: 836 acres in Piney Township from the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife for $250,833, with a 50 percent Federal-State Wildlife Grant reimbursement. The option is subject to reservations of record, including a 25-year oil and gas reservation. This parcel will become part of SGL 330, and is the second purchase of what is commonly known as the "Piney Tract." The Board approved the first purchase, 965 acres, in January.

The Piney Tract is a remarkable area of grasslands and scattered woods that has long been recognized as an important habitat for wildlife. The property was mined for coal several times beginning during World War I, resulting in a diversity of topographic features. Much of the area was reclaimed into gently rolling hills planted with various grasses.

The tract is significant because of the large populations of grassland-associated birds and the diversity of species that have occupied this area for many years.

Dan Brauning, Game Commission

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Wildlife Diversity Section supervisor, noted as an example that the Henslow's sparrow — a nationally rare bird that is classified as endangered or threatened in most states where it occurs — can be found in the hundreds on the Piney Tract.

"This is probably home to the largest concentration of this species in the state," Brauning said. "Other state endangered and threatened species, such as the short-eared owl and upland sandpiper, also can be found on this tract."

Susquehanna County: 89 acres in Apolacon and Choconut townships from the estate of Mary Carlisle Hess of Montrose. According to the Last Will and Testament of Ms. Hess, her desire was to have her property remain in its wild state and become the property of the Game Commission.

Dauphin County: an exchange of a 24-acre parcel of SGL 264 in Lykens Township with Aquilla and Ruth Ann King, who will convey to the agency a 37.7-acre parcel in Gratz Borough. The parcel being conveyed to the Game Commission will provide valuable public access off of Spruce Street to SGL 264, which currently contains 8,850 acres in Dauphin and Schuylkill counties.

"Conservation-minded individuals are helping the Game Commission leave a legacy for all Pennsylvanians to admire," Ross said. For more information on how to contribute either land or money, visit the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) and click on "Wildlife Donations."

Oil/gas and two coal mining leases approved

The Board approved an oil/gas lease and two coal mining lease amendments:

SGL 264, Dauphin County: An existing coal deep mining lease with Ladnar Inc. of Hummelstown was amended to allow surface mining to accommodate proposed deep mining. The amendment area will be 478 acres; 120 for surface mining and an additional 22 acres for operational support. During the amendment's 8-year term, it's anticipated about 800,000 tons of coal will be removed, with an estimated royalty value to the Game Commission of more than $2 million. The firm will pay the agency an annual advanced royalty of $175,000 for the future purchase of State Game Lands. Ladner will pay for all timber impacted by operations, at a double-stumpage rate. The lease also will allow for the completion of several abandoned mine reclamation projects within the local game lands areas.

SGL 79, Cambria County: An existing sandstone mining lease with Laurel Sand & Stone Inc. of Ligonier for SGL 79 was amended to allow for incidental coal removal resulting from ongoing reclamation activities of 17 acres of abandoned coal spoil piles and highwalls. The amendment paves the way for Laurel Sand & Stone to remove and sell the coal; it will pay the Game Commission a stepped royalty rate of 8 to12 percent. There currently is no estimated value for the coal onsite. The lease amendment will not affect any additional surface area.

SGL 96, Venango County: An existing oil/gas lease with Great Lakes Energy Partners LLC of Hartville, Ohio, was amended to increase the lease acreage from 520 to 590.5 acres, to accommodate an additional well. The royalty rate to the Game Commission will remain 30.251 percent.

All activities will comply with the state's surface mining and oil and gas regulations, as well as the Game Commission's standard surface mine

and oil/gas lease agreements. The leases include performance bonds and environmental protection measures, as well as agency-developed plans to re-establish wildlife habitat and vegetative cover.

Ross announces retirement, Dec. 31

VERNON R. ROSS announced at the conclusion of the June meeting that he will retire on Dec. 31. "As much as I care about serving the Game Commission, the Commonwealth's wildlife and our hunters and trappers, it's time for me to find more time for the people who matter most to me, my family," Ross said.

Ross began serving as the agency's executive director on May 10, 1999. During his tenure, the Game Commission has expanded youth hunting opportunities, and junior hunting licenses sales have increased from 100,845 in 1998, to 109,644 in 2004.

Ross oversaw the implementation of a Deer Management Section, to focus greater attention on the agency's deer program, and he created region biologists and region wildlife diversity biologists to broaden and improve the agency's wildlife management programs and to work with private landowners on habitat projects to benefit wildlife.

In addition, the agency has expanded deer hunting opportunities; implemented antler restrictions; held limited elk seasons since 2001 and bobcat seasons since 2000; and increased turkey and small game hunting opportunities.

Also, including actions taken at the June meeting, the Game Commission has approved the acquisition of more than 47,550 acres of State Game Lands since July 1, 1999. The total State Game Lands system now amounts to more than 1.4 million acres.



Vern R. Ross

A veteran of the U.S. Army, Ross served as a corporal, infantryman and combat photographer. After being honorably discharged in 1962, he was employed in the business world from 1962-95, where he served as a manager and marketing director, and vice president of operations and marketing.

A member of various sportsmen's clubs and civic organizations, Ross in 1995 was named the Commonwealth's Sportsmen's Advisor to the Governor. The first person to hold that position, he was the executive director of the Governor's Sportsmen's Advisory Council and helped facilitate meetings between Governor Tom Ridge and members of the Ridge Administration and sportsmen's organizations across the state.

For more Game Commission information visit www.pgc.state.pa.us

Steps taken to protect state from CWD

THE GAME Commissioners at the June meeting gave preliminary approval to a measure granting certain emergency authorities to the executive director to prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) if it is discovered in or near the state or poses a threat to the commonwealth's deer or elk populations.

If approved at the October meeting (October 2-4, in Harrisburg), the regulation will grant the executive director the authority to prohibit feeding of deer in the containment area if the spread of CWD poses a threat to human safety, farm animals, pets or wildlife in the commonwealth, and to ban the importation of certain high-risk deer or elk parts, such as lymph nodes, brains and spinal cords.

"While current state law and regulation prohibits the feeding of elk and bears, we do not anticipate prohibiting the feeding of deer unless or until CWD poses a threat to our deer and elk," Ross said. "However, if the Board approves this measure in October, we fully expect to implement the ban on importing certain high-risk deer and elk parts as soon as possible as a means to prevent hunters from unintentionally bringing material that could potentially cause the introduction of CWD into our state.

"As CWD is found in more and more states, most recently in New York, we must do everything we can to protect our wild deer and elk, as well as the captive deer and elk herds, from being exposed to this disease."

Those states where CWD has been found in wild or captive deer or elk herds are: Colorado; Wyoming; Montana; Utah; New Mexico; New York; South Dakota; Nebraska; Kansas; Oklahoma; Minnesota; Wisconsin; and Illinois. In addition, CWD has been detected in wild or captive deer and elk in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

This past year, as in previous years, the Game Commission collected samples from hunter-killed deer during the 2-week rifle deer season and samples from hunter-killed elk for CWD testing. This marked the fourth year for testing hunter-killed elk and the third year for testing hunter-killed deer. In total, 162 elk and 6,259 deer have been tested. So far, all samples collected have been negative.

"We are planning to continue random testing of hunter-killed deer and elk during the 2005-06 seasons, and we are pleased that the Pennsylvania and U.S. departments of agriculture will continue to play an important role in this disease surveillance program."

Goose blind application deadlines for controlled hunting areas

APPLICATION DEADLINES are fast approaching for hunters interested in being selected for the limited number of goose blinds at the controlled hunting areas at the Game Commission's Pymatuning or Middle Creek wildlife management areas. A goose blind application must be sub-

mitted on the form found on page 89 of the 2005-06 *Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*.

Hunters may apply to only one area and may submit only one application, which must include the individual's 2005-06 hunting license (back tag) number.

New this year is a youth-only hunting day at Middle Creek (November 19) and Pymatuning (November 26).

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area will accept applications through the mail until Sept. 13, at: PGC Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, P.O. Box 110, Kleinfeltersville, PA 17039-0110. A public drawing will be held at 10 a.m., Sept. 14.

Applications for the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area will be accepted through the mail until Sept. 10, at: PGC Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area, 9552 Hartstown Rd., Hartstown, PA 16131. A public drawing will be held at 10 a.m., Sept. 17.

Blinds at Middle Creek and Pymatuning will not be operational during the September season, or in the late season. Shooting days at Middle Creek during the regular season are Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Shooting days at Pymatuning during the regular season are Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

PGC addresses concerns about Social Security numbers on licenses

IN RESPONSE to concerns of hunters and trappers about having to provide their Social Security numbers when buying a license, the Game Commission has reminded all license issuing agents that failure to properly safeguard license information, especially Social Security numbers, can result in revocation of their privileges as a license agent. Additionally, disclosure of confidential information is a violation of state law.

The agency is also making all hunters and trapper aware that they may take a marker or pen and further blacken this particular block on their license, as the intent of the Game Commission is to make Social Security numbers illegible. Hunters and furtakers, however, may not make any other alterations to their licenses. To do so is a violation of state law.

Over the past few years, U.S. Congress has enacted several laws to improve enforcement of child support obligations, and among the provisions of this federal welfare reform is one that requires states to deny hunting and fishing licenses to certain persons in arrears on child support. Another provision requires state agencies to obtain Social Security numbers from applicants for recreational licenses, including hunting and furtaker licenses.

In 1997, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted legislation to implement the new federal requirements here. Consistent with the state law, the Game Commission began asking license buyers to provide Social Security numbers in 1998.

Then, in 2003, in response to concerns about Social Security numbers being printed on licenses, the Game Commission started putting a series of Xs in the Social Security number block on the back of licenses. It is this block hunters and trappers may further blacken to hide any trace of a Social Security number.

25-Year Deputies

The Game Commission, and everybody interested in the welfare of Pennsylvania's wildlife, are deeply indebted to our force of deputy wildlife conservation officers. At a tremendous time and financial expense, these officers work tirelessly on law enforcement, information and education programs, animal nuisance and damage problems, and much more. Featured here are the deputy wildlife conservation officers who have been serving us all for 25 years.



Richard Bowman
Shippensburg
Franklin County



Anthony Candeck
Wexford
Allegheny County



John A. Corle
Claysburg
Bedford County



Daniel M. Yost
Pottstown
Chester County



Pete Dersham
Mill Hall
Clinton County



Wayne R. Ellenberger
Elton
Cambria County



Edward J. Farzati
United
Westmoreland County



Louis Fisher
Rockwood
Somerset County



Harry D. Gillispie
Rogersville
Greene County



John Henning II
Erie
Erie County



Joseph E. Mihalek Jr.
Wyalusing
Bradford County



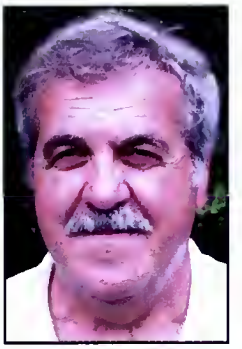
James E. Poe
Oakmont
Allegheny County



Edward J. Ritsko
LaBelle
Fayette County



Robert L. Salizzoni
Brockway
Jefferson County



Richard Swanger
Shippensburg
Franklin County



Jody C. Eyer
Mercersburg
Franklin County

Middle Creek Programs

September 17 & 18 Wildfowl Show. The 19th Annual Middle Creek Wildfowl Show will showcase the works of more than 60 waterfowl carvers, artists and others, along with decoy competitions and retriever demonstrations. Proceeds benefit the Wildlands Preservation Fund. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., both days Retriever Demonstrations, Sat. 10 a.m. and 12 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Duck and goose calling contests, Sun. 2 p.m.

September 25 National Hunting and Fishing Day. National Hunting and Fishing Day is designed to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of hunters and fishermen towards conservation. Many sportsmen's organizations and other conservation groups will be on hand, along with ongoing exhibits, programs and activities throughout the day. If you appreciate and enjoy Middle Creek, come out and thank the hunters and trappers who have made it all possible. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

October 15 Ned Smith Art Auction. This is the 12th annual wildlife art auction to benefit the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. The auction will feature several of Ned's original works along with many of his prints, including "Dutch Country Bluebirds." Also featured will be many other well-known wildlife artists. Viewing and silent auction at 9:30 a.m. Regular auction begins at noon.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.



Missouri

Hunters harvested 60,744 turkeys during the spring 2004 season, breaking the previous record of 58,421 taken in 2003. The almost continuous turkey habitat throughout the state and management practices have enabled the population to grow to between 600,000 and 800,000 birds. The spring turkey season attracts 125,000 hunters.

New Hampshire

Hunters took 2,706 turkeys during the 2004 spring season, up four percent from 2003. During the first-ever youth turkey hunting weekend, youngsters bagged 321 bearded birds in 2004. Also, during the archery-only fall 2004 turkey season hunters got 341 birds.

Top Dog

According to the American Kennel Club's 2004 registration survey the Labrador retriever, for the 15th consecutive year, was America's favorite dog. There were nearly three times more Labs registered (146,692) than any other breed. The golden retriever was second.

Ohio

Samples collected from hunter-harvested deer in 2004 came back CWD free. It was the third year in a row that no evidence of CWD was detected.

Arkansas

An ivory-billed woodpecker (long presumed extinct) sighting was verified in the Cache and White River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The last documented ivory-billed woodpecker in continental North America was in Louisiana in 1944. Ivory-billed woodpeckers are larger than pileated woodpeckers and, of course, they sport a white bill.

Numbers Don't Tell Whole Story

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation survey revealed that less than one in 20 Americans hunt (it was one in nine 40 years ago). The survey also revealed, though, that between 1991 and 2001, hunters increased the number of days they spent afield. Funds collected annually from hunters through the Pittman-Robertson Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act have risen 300 percent in half a century.

Wyoming

Only two sage grouse found dead in 2004 succumbed to West Nile virus compared to 16 in 2003. The drop is attributed to the cooler summer in 2004 producing fewer mosquitoes than in 2003. WNV was documented in Wyoming, Montana and Alberta sage grouse in 2003. In 2004, the virus was responsible for killing sage grouse in Colorado and California, as well as Wyoming and Montana.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

As hunters we should recognize that wildlife should be around for its own sake, because without it the good earth wouldn't be as good.

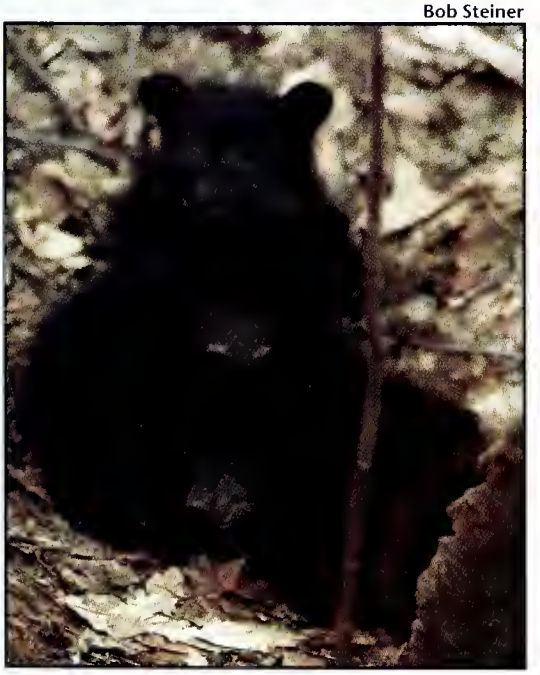
A Feeling for Wildlife

WHAT SORT of a feeling for wildlife should a hunter have? Should it be warm and tender toward game animals, or cold and flinty? Should a hunter care a lot, not at all, or feel something between "love" and its true opposite, indifference?

I've always heard that the way to show whether a position is sublime or ridiculous is to take it to the extreme. So let's start with ice and leave the fire for later.

What would happen if hunters had no feeling for the game they pursue and kill? For one thing, they would have no concern about wounding, hurting, even maiming an animal with a badly placed shot. Uncaring hunters would just blaze away. If the animal was poorly hit and lost, indifference would have them say, "oh well, just fire away at the next one. Who cares?" Perhaps such an unfeeling hunter would regret he didn't get the antlers he coveted, but he would have no recognition that he was shooting at something of flesh and blood.

Bob Steiner



What about a lack of feeling for not only the individual wild animal, but for wildlife as a whole? A steel-hearted hunter might feel something if his own last place to hunt was in jeopardy, but he would be oblivious to wildlife's deserving a home if he were not benefiting directly. He might say, "Sure, bulldoze those woods, sell off that game lands and state forest, put up another parking lot. There's nothing in it for me." If he heard Thoreau's quote that "in wildness is the preservation of the world," such a person would just go, "Huh?"

HAVING NO FEELING or too much feeling for wildlife doesn't work well in the real world, where a heart needs to be both a little soft and a little hard-edged to get by. Most of us hunters have a mixture of feeling for wildlife. These bear cubs are cute and cuddly now, but they'll be challenging game animals when they're mature. The bear population needs to be kept in check for the good of humans and the bears.

Now let's take feeling for wildlife to the other extreme. Could a person who is so softhearted as to cry over each game animal he shoots ever be a hunter? A hunter with that much empathy for wildlife would probably anthromorphize wildlife, identify so much with animals that he is going to give them fanciful humanlike attributes and capabilities. He might name the big-eyed doe approaching his gun and imagine her to have reasoning and emotional capacity that whitetails don't truly have. If he "loves" deer in the same way that he loves another person, to shoot them would not be hunting, it would be called by another, unpleasant name. With that much feeling for wildlife, he could scarcely pull the trigger.

Such deep-felt, personal love for each and every wild animal could hardly stand to see any plot of land, anywhere, be turned from a natural landscape to people's use, no matter how necessary from a human viewpoint. No lot would ever be cleared for a family's home and no trees would ever be cut for wood products, because some animal might want to climb up there or perch briefly.

Such an individual would probably believe that people should be allowed to exist only where they aren't an inconvenience to wild animals. They might think, for instance, that people should abandon the bathing beach at the park so the Canada geese can use it. So what if the birds' droppings are fouling the place and never mind that the beach was constructed for people, not waterfowl. The geese have it now, so de facto it's theirs.

Having no feeling or too much feeling for wildlife doesn't work well in the real world, where a heart needs to be both a little soft and a little hard-edged to get by. Most of us hunters have a mixture of feeling for wildlife. We try to maintain a balance that lets us care enough that we are careful to be responsible and ethical shooters. But we keep enough of a detachment that we are capable of squeezing the trigger and taking the life, for what we believe are worthwhile reasons.

Circumstances of the day, the hunt, and our own mood push and pull at the sliding scale of our feeling for wildlife. Perhaps because of what I do for a living — that is, think and write — why I hunt and what I feel about wildlife have been kicked around many times in my mind. I can understand that nonhunters have difficulty comprehending how hunters can say they "love" wildlife and at the same time "kill" it. I think we hunters can do that, because we permit ourselves to care more for wildlife in the general than adore it in the individual.

I've always felt that we hunters have an advantage over many people in that we get to see firsthand that animals die, but Life (with a capital "L") goes on. We shoot a deer, but next year a new crop of fawns keeps Deer (with a capital "D") alive. For fawn substitute grouse or turkey chick; baby rabbit or squirrel; bear cub or duckling. I think it is this realization that lets us shoot a wild animal, because we know that wild Animals will still be there. This isn't being cold-hearted, it's being pragmatic about priorities and being aware of (not to misuse the upper case) The Big Picture.

On the other hand, we hunters care enough for the individual wild animal that we know it deserves as painless of a transition as we can give it as it goes from Life to Death. We would hope the same for ourselves. Striving for the "quick, clean kill" is, of course, basic to ethical hunting. This must be deeply ingrained in the feeling we each have for wildlife; it's not something that can be taught to us in a class. Waiting for and taking only the best shot at game should come from a personal regard for the game animal, a respect for its life and its worthiness to have a merciful death. We hunters know we inflict pain, but we strive to make it as brief as possible.

We also believe it is as right for us to make venison or roast goose, rabbit stew or squirrel pot pie, as we do their domestic

meat counterparts. It's okay to raise and slaughter beef cattle, chickens and turkeys, lambs and hogs as human food, but we don't see the wild foods we eat in quite the same way. The feeling we have for game, both in the sense of their larger populations and the individuals whose meat nourishes us, is greater than we have for the animal raised on a farm or in an industrial livestock operation. We have that feeling for wildlife because we care about the process of the hunt and the ages-old tradition that brings wild food to our table as part of the yearly cycle of the seasons and the harvest of the good earth.

Because we hunters are wage earners and providers for our families, we know that people need places to live and work and shop, as well as support infrastructure, such as highways and power plants. In our feeling for wildlife populations, we also have to maintain a feeling for ourselves, as a population. People deserve land to live on and use, and sometimes that means displacing wildlife. Yet because we have a feeling for wildlife, we know that it deserves a place, too, so we try to use the landscape with wisdom, so there is room for both of us.

As hunters, our interest in having wildlife around is by definition somewhat self-serving. We also recognize that wildlife should be around for its own sake, because without it the good earth wouldn't be as good. I think that's why we hunters can go out on a brisk fall morning and kill a deer, but we will also fight hard another day to save it a forest to live in. It's just a feeling we hunters have that this is the right thing to do. ☐

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The Naturalist's Eye
By Marcia Bonta

As development gobbles up more and more open land, we need to develop an ethic of caring for the natural world we have left.

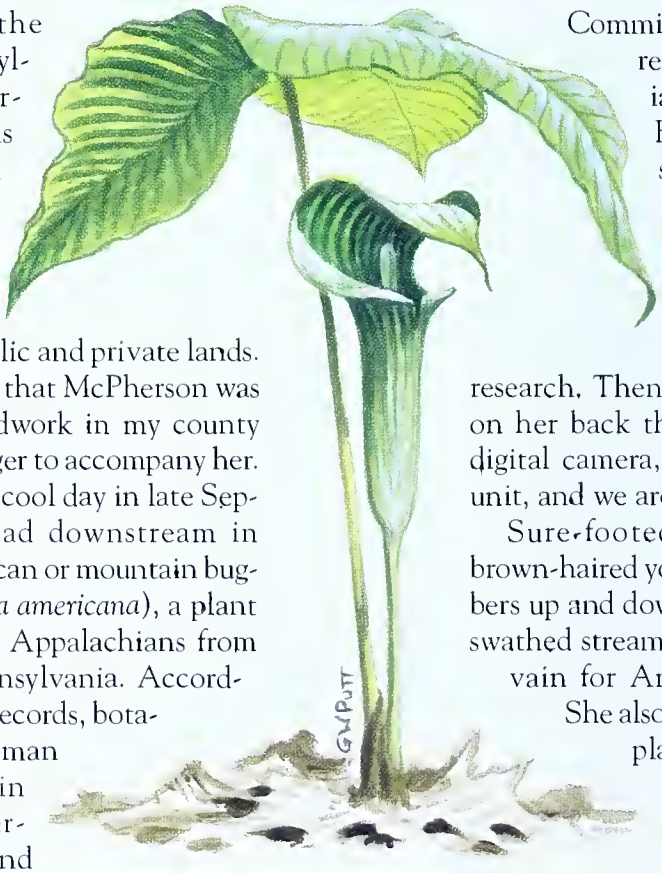
A Natural Heritage

I'M TOO OLD for this, I think as I follow Jessica McPherson up and down the steep banks of Bob's Creek on SGL 26. I'm also severely sleep-deprived, and only sheer adrenalin keeps me going. But I am determined to keep up with McPherson, a woman four decades younger than me and in terrific shape from long-distance biking and fieldwork. After all, I had asked to go along.

McPherson is an ecologist for the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Her job is to look for and document rare species, habitats, and natural communities on both public and private lands. When I learned that McPherson was conducting fieldwork in my county (Blair), I was eager to accompany her.

On a cloudy, cool day in late September, we head downstream in search of American or mountain bugbane (*Cimicifuga americana*), a plant endemic to the Appalachians from Georgia to Pennsylvania. According to previous records, botanist John Kunsman found it here in 1986. Furthermore, Blair and nearby Cambria counties are the northernmost known sites for the wildflower. Found in rich, moist, forested slopes and coves in the mountains, American bugbane is listed as a Pennsylvania rare plant by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey.

McPherson is also on the lookout for any other interesting plants and plant communities, but she relies on the Game Commission for information on rare birds and mammals and the Fish and Boat Commission for rare fish, reptiles and amphibians in her territory. Before setting out, she checks her laptop for previous plant location marks on maps based on Kunsman's research. Then she hoists a pack on her back that holds water, a digital camera, maps and a GPS unit, and we are off.



Sure-footed and lithe, the brown-haired young woman clambers up and down rhododendron-swathed stream banks, looking in vain for American bugbane. She also searches for floodplains, but most have disappeared under water. Hurricane Ivan roared

through the area 11 days earlier and Hurricane Jeanne the previous day, so the creek is high and its banks slippery.

Soon rock-hopping across the creek is the only way to move downstream without pushing our way through the thicket of rhododendron overhanging the steep bank. That is when I admit my age (to myself) and break off the end of a fallen branch to use as a walking stick. Along the creek McPherson makes note of the huge hemlocks, some mature yellow birches, and a few large American beech trees. She is also pleased to find several hobblebush shrubs tucked among the rhododendrons. The diversity of mosses is another indicator of good habitat.

Humming as she walks, she looks carefully at every unusual plant, painstakingly identifies it, and then lists its outstanding characteristics. Finally, she whips out the digital camera to further document her work. All in all she is impressed by the condition of the forest.

"A nice hollow," she comments. "We are seeing signs of very mature forest in good condition."

At last she pulls out her heavy, 10-year-old GPS unit to see how far we have "stream whacked." Do those fences and fierce signs ahead mark the property boundary? They do, indeed, and so does the difference in habitat. On the state game lands we have seen what she calls "an exemplary forest community" with no sign of deer browse. On the other side, the forest is younger and heavily deer-browsed.

But we haven't found any American bugbane. "Does that mean it is gone from this place?" I ask.

"It could be in the seed bank even if it's not poking its head out this particular year," she answers. "It takes a lot for us to write a population off."

We head the half mile back to the road where we have left our cars and our lunches and eat a late lunch before proceeding upstream for the afternoon. There, more floodplain is exposed and we discover a woodland of wildflowers — beechdrops, clintonia, Indian cucumberroot, foamflower, violets, Jack-in-the-pulpit — and several species of ground pine. A Canadian or American yew (*Taxus canadensis*) on one stream bank and a large American chestnut tree, the shells of its nuts beneath it, are other intriguing finds: The yew, because it's our only native yew and because it is declining statewide due to habitat loss and severe deer browsing, and the chestnut because it seldom grows so large, as the chestnut blight has decimated the species.

"We try to go where the plants and animals are," McPherson says, which is why we cross and re-cross the rushing stream and side tributaries and climb up and down a steep mountainside, still searching for the elusive American bugbane. As we descend a particularly steep slope, I pull a thigh muscle and limp my way over rough terrain with the help of my indispensable walking stick.

Finally, seeing no way back on the mountain side of the creek or, more likely, taking pity on me, McPherson removes her shoes and socks and quickly wades across the rocky-bottomed creek up to her knees in rushing water. Lacking her exquisite balance, I gulp and, keeping my boots on and a tight grip on my walking stick, pick my way carefully across the wide creek. My boots fill with water, but I don't care. We have reached a gravel road where I am able to stretch that thigh muscle enough to prevent my limping. Even so, although I had managed to keep up with McPherson only because, as a plant ecologist, she moves comparatively slow — her eyes constantly roving for plants — I am not in the shape she is.

Not only does she do this kind of rugged fieldwork, following land forms instead of trails, much of the year, she also lives the life of a committed conservationist in Pittsburgh, biking instead of owning a car, consuming little, and wondering why others can't similarly enjoy more outdoor-oriented lives. A native of Maryland and a

graduate of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, she had recently joined other friends in a mammoth biking trip across Pennsylvania to New York City.

At the end of our day at Bob's Creek, McPherson pulls a dried American bugbane from her plant press to show me what we didn't find — a plant that looks much like its close relative black cohosh (*C. racemosa*) except that it blooms later in the season, is somewhat shorter, and has white flowers on one side of the stem instead of alternately as black cohosh does. Its resemblance to black cohosh is one reason why American bugbane is increasingly rare. Herbal collectors for the plant trade mistake it for its look-alike relative.

McPherson also tells me about some of her discoveries on other game lands in Blair and Cambria counties. SGL 166, which adjoins Canoe Creek State Park, has a "huge, amazing wetland" in the middle of a stand of poison sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*), which usually grows mostly in northwestern Pennsylvania in calcium-rich soils. This "unique" landform includes shrub wetlands and a mixed palustrine (periodically wet) forest.



SGL 158 has Pennsylvania state threatened northeastern bullrush (*Scirpus ancistrochaetus*) in its vernal ponds. A vernal pond on SGL 184 has a rare dragonfly. The state endangered Greene's or Maryland hawkweed (*Hieracium traillii*) grows in a unique natural community on acidic cliffs on SGL 118.

McPherson is not just interested in surveying public property. She is also eager to survey private property, but she goes only where she is invited. Earlier, on a cool August day, she accompanied my son Dave and me on a walk over our mountaintop property. There, too, she was alert to every plant on the ground and tree in the forest.

When we crossed the powerline right-of-way, McPherson stopped to admire a large deerberry shrub (*Vaccinium stamineum*).

"I don't see much of this," she commented.

She also spent time peering into our 3-acre exclosure, because it already illustrates what a mature hardwood forest might look like without heavy deer pressure.

She was most interested in seeing our four vernal ponds on top of Sapsucker Ridge. Vernal ponds, along with limestone outcrops, dry acidic cliffs, uncut limestone slopes, or uncut or unplowed wetlands, have been most fruitful during her survey in Blair County. But our vernal ponds have no rare plants growing in or around them. Only one pond has the common fowl manna-grass (*Glyceria striata*) growing along its edges. At least it is a native grass. So, too, is the grass she identified growing on the Far Field Road — Virginia cut grass (*Leirsia virginica*).

Other plants she identified for us were Hickey's ground-pine (*Lycopodium hickeyi*) and a leafy liverwort rock spikemoss (*Selaginella rupestris*) growing along our stream. On a talus slope, she admired two large and twisted chestnut oaks and found at least two species of lichens on the rocks.

Once we stopped to watch a pair of box turtles courting near the vernal ponds. And at our small exclosure (36 by 36 feet), she was amazed to find the green carpet of Canada mayflower and Solomon's seal leaves so late in the season. Coming back on Shortway Trail, we stopped to admire a row of deep rose and yellow pinesaps.

She concluded that we have "forest communities typical of our area, but inter-

esting because of their age and higher quality [unmanaged] habitat." She went on to say that some of the nicest stuff she sees is on private lands, especially examples of intact natural communities, i.e. forests and wetlands with good species diversity and low impact or no management such as our place.

When she visits private lands, she always tells landowners that what she might find does not impact their ability to do anything on their property. She merely describes what she has found and suggests ways they can maintain special habitats and species. Many landowners are proud of their land and eager to protect whatever rare species or natural communities might be found on it.

The Natural Heritage Program is an international network for biological information. Pennsylvania has been divided in half for Natural Heritage Inventory purposes. The Pennsylvania chapter of The Nature Conservancy is finishing up the eastern half of the state and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy the western. Unfortunately, a block of counties in the northwest part of the state is not being included yet, so there will be a big hole in our knowledge of what natural treasures our state still possesses. Over the years, 116 plants, at least 17 mussel species, 6 mammals, 6 birds, 1 salamander, 2 turtles, 15 fishes, and no one knows how many insects have been extirpated from Pennsylvania, and more and more species are endangered, threatened or rare.

As runaway development sprawls and more highways per mile than any other state in the country gobble up more and more open land, we need to develop an ethic of caring for the natural world we have left. Surely, all of us want to leave a natural heritage for our children and grandchildren at least as rich as the one we have experienced. □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

And The Correct Answer Is . . .

Place the letter of the correct answer to each statement in the spaces provided.

____ Deer hunters during the regular firearms season must wear ____ square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back combined.

____ Number of elk harvested in Pennsylvania in 2004.

____ Number of wildlife management units in Pennsylvania.

____ Number of counties that received stocked pheasants in 2004.

____ Years *Game News* has been in publication.

____ Number of bobcats harvested in Pennsylvania during the 2004-05 season.

____ Number of bears taken in Pennsylvania in 2004.

R	196
U	34
E	76
N	22
S	2,972
H	250
T	65

answers on p. 63

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

The key to tagging a buck during the early days of the archery season is to understand deer behavior, and how they use their habitat.

Early Season Bucks

YOU'LL GET your buck either the first week of the season or some time during the last two weeks of the season in November. That's the belief my core group of bowhunting buddies subscribes to, anyway. During the last two weeks, we count on the rut to bring bucks past our stands. During that first week in early October, however, it's a whole different ballgame.

The weather's usually quite warm, the forest vegetation is thick and green, the days are long and farm crops are standing everywhere. The rut is weeks away, a full moon is building, and does and fawns travel in large family groups while the bucks often prowl together in bachelor herds. The key to tagging a buck under these conditions is to understand deer behavior, and how they use their habitat, during the early days of the bowhunting season.



ARCHERS who prefer hunting from the ground can take cover in the ample foliage clinging to trees and shrubs during the early days of Pennsylvania's season.

Sweat streamed down my temples as I stood at the base of the tree I planned to climb for a recent archery season opener. The humidity was so high a mist danced in the beam of my headlight as I prepared my stand for the ascent. By the time I climbed the tree and locked my stand in place, my long-sleeve T-shirt was drenched with perspiration. I wiped my brow on my sleeve and settled in to wait for daylight.

I felt good about my stand location. After many preseason scouting trips, I determined this stout, tulip poplar was in good range of the primary trail several bucks were using to travel from some nearby cornfields to their swampy bedding area. In the dim earliest light, I spied a nice buck walking on the trail. He bedded down about 50 yards from me in some tall grass just off the trail.

About 20 minutes later, three smaller bucks pranced down the trail and stopped in front of the big buck. As the youngsters stared in apparent awe, the old boss labored to his feet, and then walked off through the grass, dead away from my stand. The other bucks, however, continued along the trail, passing within 15 yards of my perch.

I thought for a split second about taking a shot at a small 6-point in the group before deciding I'd rather save my tag and try for the big boy another day.

Although I didn't tag a buck on that season opener, my strategy put me in perfect position to take a shot if I had wanted. And in the game of bowhunting, you can't ask for more.

When it comes to taking a buck in late September or early October, it's the work you do weeks before the season that determines your success once you're finally on stand. Scouting missions will teach you what's going on in the woods you plan to hunt come opening day.

Key in on likely deer haunts by determining which foods the deer in your area prefer early in the season. Whether you hunt in agricultural areas or dense forest, the resident herd's preferred foods are likely to change as the season wears on. In farm country, for example, soybeans are always a favorite food in late summer and early fall, when they're green and lush. But as time goes by and the beans and their stalks turn yellow, deer will look for something else to eat, such as corn.

Where I live and hunt, white oak trees usually begin dropping their luscious acorns some time within the first two weeks of our bow season. And no matter what other foods are available in the area — corn, apples, green leaves, etc. — I can always bank on deer sucking up the white oak acorns as soon as they hit the ground. So when the acorns start falling, I abandon all my other hunting sites to focus on white oak groves.

If you're hunting an area around a stream, find places where the deer cross it and plan on placing your treestand or ground blind nearby. Or, plan on hunting near a pond or livestock watering tank that's surrounded by deer tracks. Because the early part of archery season can be downright hot, you can count on deer regularly visiting the local watering holes.

When you go out scouting, be sure you scout smart. If you go trudging through the woods every day, you're going to let every deer that lives there know you're invading their territory. That could encourage them to leave the area, or at least force them to change their habits. Do as much scouting as possible from a distance. Find high vantage points that are away from your hunting area, but offer a bird's-eye view of the landscape, and spy on the deer with a spotting scope or binoculars. Once you've located an area that's rife with deer activity, then you can enter the woods to find a tree for your stand, or a good site for a ground blind, near a hot deer trail.

When you scout during the preseason, act like you're actually hunting. You wouldn't mow the lawn, then go out hunting in clothes that smell like gasoline. Wear camouflage and be as scent-free as possible. You don't want the deer to know you're around. I like to go out before sunrise or in



SCENT CONTROL is imperative during the early season, because the warm, humid, conditions allow human odor to linger on the ground where deer can detect it.



THE AUTHOR pulled all of his early season tricks out of the bag to take this 9-point on the second day of the season in 2001.

the early evening and sit in the woods in my treestand to spy on the deer I'll be hunting in a few weeks. Scouting like this lets me take what I've learned by watching deer from a distance, and from prowling around the woods looking for trails and deer sign, and put it to the test. I can see firsthand which trails the deer use most, what time they move, and who's in the herd.

Identifying the animals in a specific herd is crucial if you've got your heart set on tagging a big buck in the early days of the bow season. Bigger bucks generally don't run with the does and yearlings this time of year. Before the rut kicks in, they're typically either loners or with other bucks. A group of bucks might end up feeding in the same field as a herd of does, but the two packs probably entered the field from different locations and they probably have different bedding areas. Your best bet in the early season is to find a buck or group of bucks and then spy on them to pinpoint where they feed, where they bed and which trails they use to travel between the two.

Don't pay much attention to buck rubs this time of year. An early-season buck rub does not mean the same thing as a fresh rub you'd find during the rut. Buck rubs made during the rut are more likely to be signposts marking a buck's home turf. When you find one, you're likely to find several in a distinct line and you can be fairly certain the buck that made those rubs will return to the area at some point. Early season buck rubs tend to be scattered all over the place in no distinguishable pattern. Rubs made this time of year seem to be the mark of a buck simply walking past a tree and deciding to work out his neck muscles for a few minutes. That buck might or might not ever walk past that tree again during the season.

While I do nearly all my bowhunting from elevated stands, the early season is the one time I'll consider hunting from a ground blind. Due to the thick foliage during the early days of the season, there's plenty of cover to conceal a bowhunter on the ground. You just have to be sure you're hunting downwind from where you expect a deer to show or it will pick up your scent.

The heavy foliage is both a blessing and a curse to early season treestand hunters. It offers great cover to hide your silhouette, but it also blocks shooting lanes. It never ceases to amaze me how a deer standing less than 10 yards away can be totally hidden by a small tree that's heavy with green leaves. Carry a small pair of hand clippers to cut shooting lanes around your stand site in areas where you expect a deer to present a shot.

Whether you hunt from a tree or on the ground, during the early season focus your hunting efforts in the earliest and latest hours of hunting time. These are the best times to intercept a buck traveling to and from feeding and bedding areas. When the rut kicks in, you can have a good chance at catching a buck on the prowl at any time. At the beginning of the season, however, hunting during the middle of the day is largely a waste of time.

Scout early, scout often and scout smart this year, and you'll be on your way to unlocking the secret to bagging bucks in the early days of archery season. □

By Jim Romanelli

Within parameters, there's a spectrum of centerfire cartridges that'll do the job on deer if the shooter behind the rifle does his or hers.

What Makes a Deer Cartridge?

IT'S BEEN ABOUT 35 years, soon after passing my hunter education course, that I bought my first Pennsylvania hunting license. I'll never forget pinning it on my new vest, chomping at the bit to join my uncles not just as a tag-along, but as a real fellow hunter.

That summer I hunted woodchucks with my Uncle Joe. He loaned me his .222 Remington 788 with a Redfield 4x scope, while he used his Remington 700 .22-250 with a Redfield variable. We shared a lot of time glassing the open fields, spotting for each other, and just enjoying good conversation.

When fall finally rolled around, I had managed to accumulate $50 and bought a used 12-gauge Ithaca Model 37. I wore out two sets of blue jean bibs that season, fighting through the corn rows, brushy edges and blowdowns, busting out ringnecks, grouse, cottontails and doves.

But it was the thought of my first deer season that really got my adrenalin going. I couldn't wait to see which rifle my uncle would lend me from his collection. I figured it might be the Remington 760 in .30-06 with a Redfield 4x, or maybe the Savage 99 in .243 with the Weaver K4, or possibly his customized Mauser 98 in .300 Winchester Magnum with the Redfield variable.

Hal Korber



WHEN A BUCK like this crosses your path you'd better have a rifle/scope/bullet combination that you're familiar and comfortable with.



Jim Romanelli

HERE ARE SOME of the author's deer rifles: Sharps 1874; Springfield 1873; Marlin 1894; Winchester 1894; Savage 99; Mauser 98; Remington 14 and 700.

So, with that kind of expectation you can imagine my expression on opening morning when my uncle said, "Jim, I've got just the rifle for you," and then handed me an old Springfield Trapdoor Model 73 single-shot carbine, along with five of those .45-70 "redwood" size cartridges, with their broad, flat-nosed 405-grain slugs.

Even though I was speechless, my expression must have been revealing, because my uncle said, "Just because it isn't a repeater carrying a scope, or shoots a bottleneck cartridge at the speed of light, don't think it won't take a deer. All you have to do is your part as a hunter. There's plenty of power in that old workhorse to do the job."

At the time, those words did little to dim my disappointment on the choice of rifle, but now, after a few decades of hunting, I realize no truer words had ever been spoken.

Throughout the years I've pursued deer with scopeless rifles, such as the Remington pumps, as well as lever action Winchesters and Marlins, chambered in cartridges such as the .30-30, .38-40, and .38-55 Winchesters, and the .35 Remington. I also toted a Krag-Jorgensen in .30-40 Krag, as well as that old Springfield Model 73 in .45-70.

Although I had used scopes for varmint hunting, it wasn't until I was in my 30s that they became a steady item on my deer rifles. Sporting arms such as the Winchester Model 70, Savage Model 99, sporterized Springfield 03s and Mauser 98s, chambered for cartridges from the .243 Winchester to the .35 Whelen, were also slung across my shoulder in the field.

Any cartridge used within its limitation harvested deer cleanly. By limitations, I mean that the caliber, construction of the bullet, as well as the velocity, determined the optimum distance of the bullet's performance.

Early centerfire black powder cartridges from 1866 to the mid-1880s went through two developmental avenues. First, there were the large volume powerful cartridges, such as the .50-70, .45-70, .44-77 and .45-90, that would lob 40- to 50-caliber long, heavy, lead slugs (300-700 grains) between 1,200-1,500 fps.

These were initially chambered in single-shot rifles such as the Sharps, Maynards and Ballards, and then later in the repeaters, such as the Winchester models 76 and 86. They had rainbow trajectories that held practical accuracy for the average hunter out to around 200 yards. In the hands of target shooters and professional hunters, though, they were capable of exceptional accuracy and could cleanly take game much farther out.

It was the bullet's long length and weight for its caliber (high sectional density) that gave it the ability to penetrate completely through not only deer, but also larger game such as bear, elk and buffalo. The hardness of the lead bullet (addition of tin and antimony) was also an ingredient for penetration.

The second phase was due to the devel-

opment of the repeating rifle. Its initial design did not have a strong enough lock-up to accommodate those large cartridges, so smaller cases with shorter lighter bullets were developed for a less powerful round. Cartridges such as the .44-40 and .38-40, as chambered in the Winchester Model 73, sent their slugs of 170-200 grains from 1,200-1,500 fps. Due to the fact that their bullets were short (low sectional density for the caliber) they lost speed and power fairly quickly, but were pretty fair deer cartridges out to around 100 yards.

In the next 10 years (1885-1895) a movement was made to medium power cartridges that could be used for target shooting as well as hunting. Rounds such as the .32-40 and .38-55 could be had in single-shots, as well as the newer medium frame lighter rifles (Winchester Model 94 and Marlin Model 93). These rounds (170-255 grains) started out as light loads (1,200-1,400 fps) for punching paper (200-300 yards) and close range hunting (150 yards). But as firearm metallurgy improved, ammo manufacturers came out with higher speed versions (1,800 fps) of these cartridges, which then had the power to reach out to 200 yards.

Even cartridges such as the .32-20 and .25-20, at around 1,300 fps with their lighter 86-100-grain bullets, have made venison. They originally were designed for small to medium size game, but when used on deer, their ability to penetrate effectively into the vitals was limited. This meant they had to be used at fairly close range (well within 100 yards), and bullet placement had to be right on the money.

The introduction of smokeless powder and the full metal-jacketed bullet by the military in the 1890s, chambered in the new stronger bolt actions, was, ballistically, a real boon. This allowed smaller caliber bullets to be driven at speeds of more than 2,000 fps. This gave flatter trajectories and, therefore, greatly improved accuracy at ranges beyond 200 yards, and with far less recoil than the older, blackpowder rounds.

Some of the more renowned military cartridges from that time period of ballistic development are the 6.5x55 Swedish Mauser (160-grain at 2,400 fps), 7x57 Spanish Mauser (175-grain at 2,300 fps) and .30-40 Krag (220-grain at 2,200 fps). They don't seem like much compared to the 3,000 fps plus cartridges we have today, but back then they were considered high velocity cartridges.

From there evolved the jacketed "controlled" expanding bullet, and this was a great step in beefing up the smaller caliber cartridges with greater knockdown power due to the mushrooming effect, without having to be dependent on large, soft, lead, flatnose bullets. This benefited not only the military rounds used for hunting, but also all of the commercial rounds that sprouted up, such as the .303 Savage, .30-30 Winchester, .32 Winchester Special, along with the .25, .30, .32 and .35 Remington cartridges. These newer cartridges could be had in rifles such as the Savage 99, Winchester 94 and Marlin 93 lever actions, as well as the Remington Model 14 and 141 pump models. They were popular for decades in the forested areas, where shots were likely to be within 200 yards. The

Jim Romanelli



THESE cartridges have taken their share of deer over the years.



Bob D'Angelo


Bob D'Angelo

THE conventional .270 Winchester that this Weatherby rifle is chambered for is about as good a deer cartridge as you'll find. It's accurate, flat shooting and has mild recoil.

only two that have really remained popular today are the .30-30 Winchester and .35 Remington.

As the sporting rifle evolved, it took time for the bolt actions to gain acceptance by American hunters. The medium powered lever and pump action with their tube magazines slowly gave way to the bolts with column magazines (Mauser 93, 95 and 98 and Springfield 03), which were stronger and could handle higher pressure cartridges, such as the 6.5x55 Swede, .30-06 and 8x57mm.

These cartridges started out with bullets (160-220 grains) that were long for their caliber, but it wasn't long before their long roundnose bullets traveling around 2,200 fps were replaced by lighter, more aerodynamic spitzers that could be pushed at 2,800 fps with 140- to 180-grain bullets, which had flatter trajectories and improved game getting accuracy out beyond 250 yards. When scopes became affordable, the accuracy of rifles chambered in those rounds improved even more.

From these cartridges sprouted rounds such as the .270 Winchester, .280 Remington, .284 Winchester, .300 Savage and .308 Winchester, as well as a host of others that featured expanding spitzer bullets traveling between 2,600-3,000 fps. As long as the marksman behind the rifle was skilled, taking game at 300 or more yards was not a stretch.

Throughout the years many sportsmen have been interested in mild recoil and dual purpose (deer/varmint) cartridges. So next in line came, for example, the .250 Savage, .257 Roberts, 6mm Remington and the .243 Winchester. These would send expanding bullets of 87 to 120 grains flying at up to 3,000 fps or more.

The copper-jacketed bullets of these cartridges varied from being very thin to heavier and thicker. The lighter projectiles were designed to be more fragile, which was effective on varmints, and the heavier ones allowed the lead noses to expand midway down the bullet, but yet hold both jacket and bullet together in a mushroom shape to deliver more knockdown power when penetrating through the vital area of larger, tougher game.

I remember seeing years ago a deer shot with 87-grain bullets from a .257 Roberts that would have escaped had it not been hit several times. Two of the rounds hit the chest but never penetrated the lung/heart area far enough for a clean kill, because the slugs were designed to expand quickly on varmint-type game. Luckily, a third round hit the upper neck and dropped the deer. Had a 100- to 120-grain bullet with a tougher jacket been used, there would have been far greater penetration, likely resulting in a clean, 1-shot kill.

In reality, these dual-purpose cartridges

filled the bill for just about all those who wanted one rifle to pursue deer and varmints. The limiting penetrating factor as far as taking antlered game cleanly was that some of these calibers were a bit too small to consistently carry enough power for deer beyond 250-300 yards, unless shot placement was exact.

There has, though, always been those who wanted a deer cartridge that would deliver more power at longer ranges, so the belted magnums from 25- to 35-caliber (any cartridge over .35 caliber in the belted cartridges can be considered "dangerous game" level) were developed. Examples include the .300 Holland & Holland, the Weatherby magnums in 7mm, .270 and .300, as well as the 6.5 Winchester Magnum, 7mm Remington Magnum, .300 Winchester Magnum and, more recently, the ultra magnums along with the beltless short magnums. These cartridges reach out and hit hard, but the tradeoff is increased recoil. As long as the rifleman shouldering the rifle had the right optics and skill, these cartridges would cleanly take game well beyond 300 yards. East of the Mississippi these magnums really aren't necessary, though, except for possibly in agricultural areas and open powerlines, but west of the big river they became more of the standard ordinance due to the wide open spaces.

Most hunters I know are rifle cranks, with an assortment of rifle/cartridge combinations that fit every niche anyone could think of. We labor for hours on finding just the right combination of caliber, bullet, powder and primer when creating what we believe is the right load. There are a lot of others, though, who are strictly hunters who have one, maybe two, firearms that do it all under any and all circumstances.

Perfect examples were my Uncle Dick, who used a Savage Model 99 in .300 Savage with 150-grain bullets, and his buddy Scrub — I never knew his real name — who used a Winchester Model 94 in .25-35 with 117-grain bullets, for more than 40 years.

When an animal fell to the crack of either rifle, then that was "deer enough cartridge" for them. They could never understand what the big hoopla was in searching for, what others perceived as the perfect deer ballistics. Their motto was "when you get a clean shot, put the sights in the right place and pull the trigger."

So whether hunting in the West or here in the mountain laurel forests of Pennsylvania, almost every hunter will wrestle with what is the perfect deer cartridge. The truth is no matter which one you choose, as long as you match your shooting skill with consideration to bullet construction and its velocity, and its practical range, there's almost no wrong choice.

You know it's funny that even after using all sorts of up-to-date cartridge/rifle/optic combinations over the years, my two favorite deer cartridges and rifles are a Savage 99 in .300 Savage with a Weaver K2.5, and a Winchester Model 70 in 7x57 Mauser with a Redfield Widefield 2-7x. But then again, there are still times when I grab that old Springfield .45-70 just to see if I can still do it, because that slow moving 405-grain payload is certainly a "deer enough cartridge" for anyone. □

What's Legal For Deer?

Outside of the Special Regulations Areas (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties), permitted are manually operated centerfire rifles and handguns with an all lead bullet, or a bullet designed to expand on impact. For further details, see page 48 of the *2005-06 Hunting & Trapping Digest.*

Fun Game answers:

H, U, N, T, E, R, S

CROSSINGS

Sprawl

IN HIS BOOK *Our Vanishing Landscape*, published a half century ago in 1955, the writer and artist Eric Sloane lamented the "highway civilization" that had begun to overspread rural America. I wonder what Sloane would think were he alive today (he died in 1985) and witness to the sprawl that continues to transform our landscape.

Sloane noted that highways attract strips of development along each side. Formerly, when much of our population worked in agriculture, houses were scattered about on "a solid patchwork quilt of farms." Change is constant, and there's not a lot we can do about that fact. But, as thinking beings, we ought to be able to guide that change and keep it from destroying the things we value, including our remaining farms and wildlife habitat.



From 1945 to 1970, development in the U.S. each year claimed a territory roughly the size of Rhode Island. The ongoing loss of open space alarmed many people. Traditional conservationists — many of them hunters and anglers — were joined by a new breed of activists, few of whom had ever raised a rifle or cast a lure. Sprawl drew attention to other environmental problems, such as air and water pollution. In response to the rising tide of activism, Congress passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

A piece of legislation that failed to become law was a National Land Use Policy Act that would have provided a blueprint for sound development. It turned out that the ideal of wise land use was a lot harder to define than clean air or water. In the end, property rights advocates prevented passage of a law that would have placed societal values above an individual's rights to determine exactly how to use his or her land.

Personal property rights are almost sacrosanct in our nation. In Pennsylvania, local self-determination is strong: the Commonwealth has more than 2,600 municipalities, each with the authority to make its own land-use decisions. That kind of freedom is a treasured right, but with it must come a responsibility to use the land wisely, to deliver unto the next generation an environment that remains productive and clean. Without places where humans can hunt and fish and hike and go birding and cross-country skiing, we are all poorer.

There's no easy answer to the question of what to do about sprawl. At this point, we may no longer have the ability or the power to arrest it. But we must try. We must ask ourselves questions both personal and societal. Do I really need that second car, or that vacation home in the mountains? Does my ability to pave over my acres affect my neighbor's rights to enjoy and use his or her land? Do creatures other than ourselves have value, and if so, how should we appraise and protect that value?

We must come together as a society, at a time when many forces — automobiles, the media, the electronic world to which we now have access — are driving us further apart. We must remember that we are stewards of the planet. Keeping in mind the title of Eric Sloane's book, we must act to prevent our cherished rural landscape from vanishing forever.

Chuck Fergus

IMPORTANT NOTICE

PROTECT YOUR RIGHT TO OWN FIREARMS

Own firearms or want to own a firearm? Enjoy hunting and target shooting?

Supply alcohol to minors or allow minors to drink and you can lose your right to own firearms. In Pennsylvania, if you are convicted of corruption of minors you are banned from owning and possessing firearms.



Pennsylvania is getting tough on underage drinking and the adults who allow it.

Pennsylvania Crimes Code Title 18 Section 6105 Persons not to possess, use, manufacture, control, sell or transfer firearms.
(a) Offense defined (1) A person who has been convicted of an offense enumerated in subsection (b). Section 6301 corruption of minors

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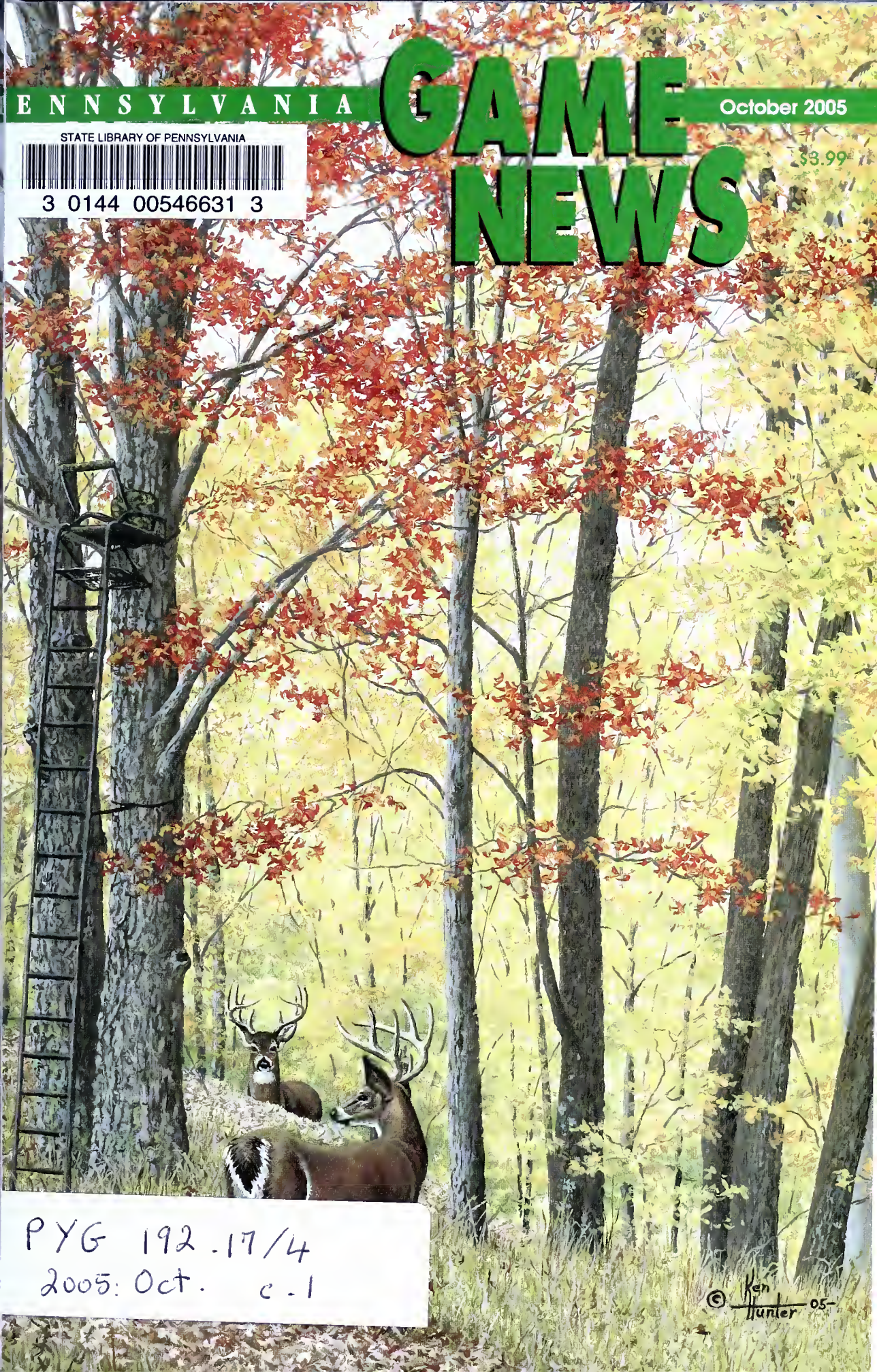
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PA Deer Hunting
1985 vs 2005

By Bob Mitchell

WELL, IT WAS FUN, and interesting, too. Here are the results of the survey we ran in the March issue. The survey — you probably recall — was largely a repeat of the deer hunting part of a survey we ran in 1985, and we ran this one to see how deer hunting has changed in the past 20 years. Actually, this latest survey came about as a result of a discussion with gun columnist Jim Romanelli about what calibers and rifles Pennsylvania deer hunters are using.

Statistically, these results cannot be considered definitive, because they're based not on deer hunters, or on *Game News* readers, either, but just on those readers who took the time and went to the expense of responding to the survey. Despite those biases, in at least a general sense the results do reflect how deer hunting has changed here over the past two decades. These 2005 figures are based on the tabulated results from 1,000 completed

1. For how many years have you been hunting deer? 26.1 years **39.9 years**

2. How many deer have you taken in Pennsylvania during your hunting career?
   Antlered: 6.4 **14.1** Antlerless: 6.0 **16.2**

3. Do you hunt deer in the following seasons?

Archery:	44.5	46.1		
Early Muzzleloader:		32.3		
Regular firearms:	98.1	99	For Antlerless: 62.4	80.4
Late Flintlock:	26.9	36.7		
Late Archery:		17.1		

4. What make, model and caliber of firearm(s) do you use for deer?

Caliber

1.	30-06	34.20
2.	30-30 Winchester	15.46
3.	308 Winchester	9.86
4.	270 Winchester	9.59
5.	243 Winchester	5.55
6.	35 Remington	3.92
7.	300 Savage	3.26
8.	7mm Remington Mag	2.61
9.	32 Special	2.48
10.	257 Roberts	1.37
11.	6 mm Remington	1.24
12.	8 mm Mauser	1.04

1.	30-06	29.66
2.	270 Winchester	12.05
3.	308 Winchester	11.74
4.	30-30 Winchester	7.61
5.	243 Winchester	5.63
6.	35 Remington	3.59
7.	300 Savage	3.26
8.	7mm-08	3.09
9.	7mm Remington Mag	2.93
10.	280	1.67
11.	32 Special	1.51
12.	257 Roberts	1.19

Firearm Brands

1.	Remington	40.56
2.	Winchester	24.76
3.	Marlin	11.41
4.	Savage	8.69
5.	Ruger	3.16
6.	Sako	1.40
7.	Weatherby	1.23
8.	Browning	0.97
9.	Stevens	0.35
10.	Assorted sporterized military	4.57
11.	Others	2.90

1.	Remington	42.22
2.	Winchester	19.41
3.	Savage	8.38
4.	Marlin	6.50
4.	Ruger	6.50
6.	Browning	2.95
7.	Sako	1.21
7.	Weatherby	1.21
9.	Assorted sporterized military (Mauser and Springfield)	3.47
10.	Others	6.42

Firearm Make and Models

1.	Remington 760	17.10
2.	Remington 700	11.18
3.	Winchester 70	9.27
4.	Marlin 336	5.98
5.	Winchester 94	5.26
6.	Savage 99	3.11
7.	Ruger 77	2.63
8.	Winchester 88	2.58

1.	Remington 760 (inc. 7600)	13.13
2.	Remington 700	12.71
3.	Winchester 70	8.73
4.	Ruger 77	4.66
5.	Savage 99	4.24
6.	Winchester 94	3.90
7.	Marlin 336	3.30
8.	Winchester 88	2.54
9.	Remington 7	2.46

Firearm Make, Model and Caliber

1.	Remington 760	30-06	12.80
2.	Remington 700	30-06	5.40
3.	Winchester 94	30-30	4.40
4.	Marlin 336	30-30	4.05
5.	Winchester 70	30-06	4.02

1.	Remington 760	30-06	9.14
2.	Remington 700	30-06	3.94
3.	Winchester 70	30-06	3.31
4.	Winchester 94	30-30	2.21
5.	Winchester 70	270	1.97
6.	Winchester 88	308	1.89

surveys, which is the same number of surveys the 1985 survey was based on.

The most telling changes are in the responses to questions 1 and 2. In 20 years, the average number of years respondents have been hunting deer increased almost 14 years. This indicates a rapidly aging audience — among *Game News* readers, anyway, if not deer hunters in general.

That hunters have enjoyed outstanding deer hunting over the past two decades is obvious, with the average number of antlered and antlerless deer taken among respondents increasing, respectively, by 8 and 10.

For hunting by seasons, the most dramatic changes are the increases in those who hunt in the antlerless and late flintlock seasons, which have both been greatly expanded over the past two decades. Twenty years ago, antlerless allocations were running around 500,000; hunters were allowed only one license; and if they got a buck, their antlerless license was no longer valid. One deer a year. In recent years, antlerless allocations have been running around a million; hunters may buy up to three — even more in special regulations ar-

5. What make and power of scope(s), if any, do you use for deer?

Scope power

1.	3x-9x	42.09
2.	4x	29.13
3.	2x-7x	10.75

1.	3x-9x	47.45
2.	4x	13.52
3.	2x-7x	10.20
4.	4x-12x	3.73

Scope brand

1.	Leupold	21.31
2.	Bushnell	19.00
3.	Redfield	17.85
4.	Weaver	14.92
5.	Tasco	7.73
6.	Bausch & Lomb	2.22
7.	Lyman	1.42
8.	Burris	0.98
9.	Unertl	0.80
10.	Other brands	5.77
11.	Brands unspecified	7.99

1.	Leupold	29.69
2.	Bushnell	20.09
3.	Redfield	11.37
4.	Tasco	9.07
5.	Weaver	7.84
6.	Simmons	7.58
7.	Nikon	3.00
8.	Burris	2.38
9.	Bausch & Lomb	1.68
10.	Swift	0.62
11.	Unertl	0.53
12.	Zeiss	0.44

Scope brand and power

1.	Bushnell	3x-9x	13.12
2.	Leupold	3x-9x	11.79
3.	Redfield	3x-9x	9.56
4.	Weaver	4x	8.11
5.	Bushnell	4x	5.31
6.	Leupold	2x-7x	5.21
7.	Redfield	4x	4.83
8.	Tasco	3x-9x	4.05
9.	Leupold	4x	3.28
10.	Tasco	4x	2.80

1.	Leupold	3x-9x	12.37
2.	Bushnell	3x-9x	11.66
3.	Redfield	3x-9x	5.23
4.	Tasco	3x-9x	4.52
5.	Leupold	2x-7x	4.28
6.	Simmons	3x-9x	3.81
7.	Weaver	4x	3.33
8.	Redfield	2x-7x	2.14
9.	Bushnell	4x	2.06
	Leupold	4x	2.06

eas — and antlerless deer licenses remain valid if a hunter takes a buck. Hunters now may take four or more deer a year.

Another aspect we didn't look at 20 years ago but did now, because of computers, is the percentage of hunters who take advantage of various combinations of deer hunting seasons. For example, of the respondents, 26.3 percent hunted only in the regular firearms seasons; 10.5 percent hunted in all but late archery; 10.4 percent only for antlered deer in only the regular firearms season; and 8.1 percent hunted in the muzzleloader and regular firearms seasons, but no archery. Those who indicated they hunted in all the seasons accounted for 5.5 percent of our hunters.

The increased opportunities and interest in antlerless deer hunting is also reflected in the answers to question 7: In 1985, 56.4 percent of the respondents said they annually applied for an antlerless deer license, while in 2005, the percentage was 80.4 percent.

While deer hunting has changed in many ways, the rifles we're using have not. The

6. Do you *always* send in a Big Game Harvest Report card after taking a deer?
   Yes: 91.2% **91.1%** No: 8.8% **8.9%**

7. Do you annually apply for an antlerless license?
   Yes: 56.4% **87.2%** No: 43.6% **12.5%**

8. Do you annually apply for an "unsold" antlerless license? Yes: **57%** **No: 43%**
   If so, how many? 1.5 (range 1-10)

10. Who processes deer taken by you: yourself, a friend, a commercial butcher (check one)
Yourself: 46.9% **50.5%** Friend: 10.5% **10%** Commercial Butcher: 42.6% **48.9%**

11. Do you like the new antler restrictions? Yes: **54.2%** **No: 45.8%**

most notable change is that the .30-30, and lever action rifles, are not as popular as they were 20 years ago, but the Remington 760 (and 7600) in .30-06 remains the most widely used deer rifle in Pennsylvania. The information doesn't exist to check, but hunters seem to have more deer rifles today than 20 years ago. Actually, on the ranking of calibers, the 50-caliber was in fourth place, with 10.75 percent of the respondents indicating they had one. Muzzleloader firearms were not included in these results, because we had no comparable information from 1985.

For scopes, the 3-9x remains the top choice, while the straight 4x, still in the number two slot, is not nearly as popular as it was in 1985. Variable scopes are certainly more popular than ever before. As for brands, changes there largely reflect changes in scope manufacturers over the years.

54 percent of the respondents favor antler restrictions. That this so closely matches the results of questions asked on more scientific surveys adds validity to our findings here.

Going from one season to the next, it's easy for us to get lulled into thinking that deer hunting is the same from year to year. Truth is, though, that deer hunting is changing: Always has and always will. Hunters come and go, seasons change, deer numbers change, firearms and other equipment change. The changes are subtle, but when looking back as we did here, we can see some quite dramatic changes. It's also safe to say that the last 20 years have seen more deer and more deer hunting opportunities than at any other time in our history.

What the next 20 years may bring is hard to say. With hunters getting older, current efforts to bring deer numbers more in line with what the habitat can support, huntable land becoming harder to find, only one thing is certain: Deer hunting will be different.

Survey results 20 years ago were tabulated by hand and calculations were made using a hand-held calculator. This year's survey responses were entered into a computer by *Game News* Administrative Assistant Patty Monk, and the calculations were made by *Game News* Wildlife Education Specialist Lori Richardson, with assistance from PGC Bureau of Information Technology computer programer Lindsay Moawad. *Game News* Associate Editor Bob D'Angelo was particularly invaluable for his wealth of knowledge of firearms manufacturers, models and calibers.

Of course, none of this would have been possible if it hadn't been for all you who responded. Thank you very much, and thanks for the many comments, too, we all certainly enjoyed them.

Lessons

THERE COMES a time in every sportsman's life when he realizes he is a sportsman, or what being a sportsman really means. It happens to people at different times. Some, like me, don't realize it happened until many years later.

I was three when I first went hunting with my father. He would come home from work and take me groundhog hunting. We would sit all afternoon in Deavon's field, watching for 'hogs. Deavon was a farmer who gave my dad permission to hunt his property. Initially he invited Dad out to help get rid of some pigeons that had become a nuisance in his barn. It was an exciting afternoon. At the end of the evening, when two pigeons flushed together, Dad shouldered his Remington 870 and dispatched them both with one shot. I remember old Sylvester Deavon was so tickled he told my dad, "You can hunt my land anytime. While you're at it, get rid of those pesky groundhogs." And so it went, after Dad got off work, out we'd go. He'd light a cigar to keep the bugs away, and there we'd sit, watching.

I didn't understand the significance then. For Dad, it was a lot of things we can all relate to now. For me it was just neat to be out with my dad, who had the rifle. I got to put on an orange vest (he had to wrap it around me twice to make it fit, I was so small), boots and an orange hat, just like Dad. It didn't get any better than that. Occasionally we would get to see how far away he could hit a groundhog. I remember how neat I thought it was when that Sako would go off. He would shoot at one a couple hundred yards away, and the groundhog would disappear. "Did ya get him, Dad?" I would ask.

"Yup," he'd say.

"Are you sure?" I would ask skeptically. To me, it always looked like the chuck had just disappeared into its hole. "How do you know?" I would ask.

"I heard the bullet hit," he'd say with confidence.

"Oh, okay," I'd reply. As hard as I would try, I could never hear that bullet hit its target. Even after he would tell me this I remained a little skeptical. But every time we would walk out, sure enough, there would be a groundhog lying there.

One day we were walking through the cornfield back to the car, an old '68 Chevelle. We had gotten within 25 yards of the car when a huge ring-necked pheasant flushed right out from under me. It made so much noise, and grass and dirt flew from its beating wings as it lifted off the ground. I was so surprised, it felt like my heart stopped. I jumped 10 feet in the air it seemed. "Shoot it! Shoot it!" I yelled.

Dad, standing there laughing as I yelled, replied, "I can't shoot that."

Feeling a little angry now, because it scared me so bad, and partly because he let it get it away, I asked, "Why not?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't have a shot-

By Rich Vogelsong

gun and, two, it's June — they're not in season."

"Well couldn't you shoot him, anyway?" I asked.

With a chuckle, Dad said, "No." With that, we got in the Chevelle and headed home. I remember him explaining seasons and being able to shoot certain animals at certain times. To do anything else wouldn't be playing by the rules — that was cheating, and cheating was never allowed. My dad made that clear from as long as I can remember.

That, I now know, was my first lesson in sportsmanship and there were more to come. Every summer I would go out groundhog hunting with Dad. Looking back, I don't remember having that much enthusiasm, I think I was going just to be with Dad. That would eventually change.

In the fall of 1980 I was 8 years old. Dad would go squirrel hunting in October and November, primarily to scout for deer. That year I went into the woods for the first time. With the exception of getting to see my dad shoot the squirrels, I don't remember having a lot of excitement for the woods, either. We walked a lot, I got tired, and when we stopped and sat, I got cold. We would sit for what seemed like hours. My toes would get numb, and finally, after a few hours in the woods, Dad would take pity on me and we'd leave for home. I remember on one of those fall excursions my dad asking me, "Can you hear those geese?"

"What geese?" I would ask, and a few seconds later, there they were, I could hear them. I remember thinking my dad was Superman. He could hear things long before I could, he could walk for what seemed like forever, he never got cold, and when it came to shooting, he didn't miss.

The fall of 1981 came and went



with little excitement. I went squirrel hunting with Dad, with little or no real action in the woods. We would harvest some squirrels every weekend, but that was the extent of it. I had yet to see a deer in the wild. Looking back, I'm not sure I knew the difference between a buck and doe yet. I knew Dad hunted them, and he had a 6-point rack mounted from a few years before. Buck season came and went that year with no success for my dad — it had been a few years since he had filled a tag. He made me understand that was part of hunting; you don't always come home with game.

Doe season came, and I can remember being somewhat excited. Dad was expressing confidence that he'd shoot a deer, and I was finally going to get to see one. What I didn't realize was that there was snow in the forecast. On the eve of doe season Dad told me, "If there's snow on the ground tomorrow, I promise I'll get a doe." That was good enough for me. I knew one thing, my dad kept his promises.

Morning came and, sure enough, there was 6 to 8 inches of fresh powder on the ground. Dad set out early and, wouldn't you know it, we didn't have school. My sister and I were out sledding behind our house when I saw the Chevelle come up the road and through the hollow. When he got to the driveway I was there to meet him. Every time Dad went deer hunting he was out until after dark. This day was different, it was only 2 o'clock, and he was home. "Did ya get one?" I asked.

With a smile on his face he said, "I promised you one, didn't I?" With that he threw open the trunk lid, and there she was. She filled up the whole trunk.

I remember thinking what a pretty animal it was. With this new experience came a bunch of new questions. And my dad was happy to answer every one of them. I think this was my first time showing interest in the hunt. I wanted to know exactly what happened and how he knew he would get a deer this day. He proceeded to explain the snow, how he and his partner, Ray, picked up a herd's tracks, and within a few hours of tracking they had their deer. The details fascinated me, it sounded just like a movie, and for the first time I was wishing I was there, but I had a few years to go.

The following year I was 10. I remember it was a busy year for my dad, that there wasn't much time for groundhogs that summer. I was busy playing baseball, and as we had just moved into a new house a few years earlier, Dad's list of chores wasn't getting as small as he would have liked by that time. We did get out for chucks a couple times, but things seemed different. The fields seemed smaller, the farm looked older, and things just felt quieter, almost like the game had left.

It had been six years since that flushing cockbird scared me silly. I remembered it then as clearly as I remember it now, and it was the first realization for me that times were changing. For me, looking back now, it was small, but for Dad, it was much bigger. He would tell me stories about going small game hunting with three or four others and everyone getting their limit, whether they were hunting pheasants, rabbits or both. My dad's face would really come alive with those memories. I didn't have all of that to relate to, but for him, the changes were colossal.

Fall came, and squirrel season drew near. We were out on opening day, and the woods were fairly quiet. We walked in and found a spot with three nearby squirrel nests, and Dad decided this was a good place to sit. "Do you know what they are?" my dad asked, pointing to the tops of the trees. I had this lesson in years past, but the answer escaped me. Seeing the puzzled look on my face, he answered, "They're squirrel nests." I knew they lived in trees, but I also remember thinking that nests were for birds, and so another lesson. There

would be plenty of those this year. Sure enough, there were plenty of squirrels that morning. Later we would go home with our limit. Little did I know that 10 was the perfect age for learning how to clean squirrels. Yup, the lessons just kept coming — what a joy that one was.

The following Saturday we were out again. We would sit a little, maybe get a squirrel or two, and then move. Finally, while walking, Dad stopped. I always walked behind him. When he stopped, I stopped, and I would stay still and quiet until he moved again. This was what I had been taught from day one. This time he stopped and motioned for me to step up beside him.

Pointing at some small trees and saplings along the path he asked, "Do you know what they are?" I was 10, all I saw were trees. However, it was the rubbed bark on the trees that were the subject of this lesson. "Those are buck rubs," Dad explained "That means there's deer around," he continued. "Lets drop down over the side and sit a while. Maybe we'll see something."

"Dad, my feet are cold," I objected. My toes were getting numb, and the mountain didn't seem to be getting any warmer.

"The walk will warm them up," he replied. "We'll go home after we sit for awhile."

As we approached the edge of the flat I asked Dad, "What was the closest you ever got to a deer?"

After a moment he said, "I had a fawn get so close to me one time I could've reached out and touched it."

"No way," I said. "How'd that happen?"

He continued, "I just stayed real still when I saw it, and she just happened to walk right by me. She never saw me."

Cool, I thought. "Think that could happen again?" I asked.

"That stuff doesn't happen very often," he explained, trying to keep me from getting my hopes up. We continued down over the side of the mountain and found a good spot at a tree next to the trail. I sat down with Dad standing next to me and started thinking of that fawn walking by him. The doe he shot the year before was also in my mind. We were there for what seemed like an hour. Definitely long enough for my toes to start going



numb. Dad could see my feet wiggling. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"My toes are numb."

With a chuckle he told me, "We'll leave in another 20 minutes." It wasn't five minutes when he nudged me and voiced a quiet, but stern, "Don't move."

I knew that tone: I listened. But I had to know, so with a whisper I asked, "What is it?"

He was looking intensely down the path. Quietly he said, "There's something moving about 100 yards in front us. It's coming down the path. Stay still." Another minute or two went by and I didn't see anything. Then I thought I saw a flicker, or a shadow, something, I wasn't sure. Whatever it was it seemed to almost blend right in with the woods. One second it would be there, the next it would kind of just fade into the background. And then I could hear it. The leaves rustling or a branch swishing. As it got closer, I could see it was a deer.

With my realization of what was approaching, Dad whispered, "It's a buck."

Holy cow, I thought, he can see that? I could see the deer, but the rack blended perfectly with the surrounding brush. The deer approached very slowly, his head down, sniffing the ground. He seemed to take forever just to move 10 yards. As he got closer, with head down, I still couldn't see a rack. It was nothing short of amazing to my 10-year-old mind. I was sitting as still as I possibly could — I didn't want to scare him.

He was coming down a path that bent right toward us. The path followed the contour of the mountain. As the deer approached, he left the path when he got to the bend. He didn't change direction; he just didn't follow the bend. Now off the path he wouldn't be passing within feet, but still within a few yards. I was looking right at him now, my heart was pounding so hard I thought he would hear it. He was inside 50 yards now, and I still couldn't see antlers, but I was sitting down. He was definitely inside 30 yards now, with nose to the ground.

All of a sudden there was a loud thrashing and cackling from overhead. The sudden chaos at the top of the trees kept me from being still, and I looked up to see the source. The deer, also occupied by the sudden disturbance, didn't catch my movement. In a whisper Dad asked, "Was that a turkey?"

"Yeah," I replied quietly (I was guessing, mostly; it was only the second one I had seen in the wild), and then quickly regathered myself so as to remain still. The deer watched over its shoulder as the turkey flew off cackling, and then turned its head back, and I noticed the rack. That was the first time I saw a buck in the wild. I couldn't count the points, at 10 I didn't think to, but the rack was high above the ears.

As he continued on he came to within eight or 10 yards. I couldn't believe it. He got right in front of us, no more than 30 feet away and turned broadside. Looking back now, it was the kind of shot an archery hunter dreams about. Then, suddenly, as if a sixth sense told him something wasn't right, he just stopped, picked up and turned his head, looked me dead in the eye and froze. I don't know what he spotted, my breath in the cool fall air, maybe I blinked. There he stood, his eyes locked on mine, while I tried to stay as motionless as he.

I remember staring at him and thinking how big he looked. I could see every muscle in his body. He was definitely in shape and eating well. He stood there frozen, like a statue. He held that pose for what seemed like forever, although it was only about 10 or 15 seconds. He bobbed his head up, down, and then up again, as if trying to pinpoint that thing he knew just

didn't belong, although he was not quite sure what that was. Once convinced that all was well, he turned and proceeded up the side of the mountain, with his nose to the ground once again. We watched him meander up the slope and disappear over the edge onto the flat.

"What did you think of that?" Dad asked.

"That was cool," I gasped quietly.

"You wanted to know how close you could get," he said. It was almost as if nature was listening to our conversation moments earlier and decided to show this young sportsman-to-be just what close looked like. I was so excited that I forgot all about my toes being cold. I remember Dad asking about them and then I realized they weren't numb anymore. We gave the deer plenty of time to get out of the area, and then we headed home.

We continued to see that deer every Saturday for the next four weeks. We were never that close again, and he sometimes showed up with does. It was amazing, though, that every Saturday, a little after 9 o'clock, he showed up. The buck's consistency made Dad go so far as to guarantee that he'd get that buck on the first day of the season, provided the buck's schedule wasn't interrupted by all the first day activity.

A few other things happened that year as well. For Christmas I received my first rifle. It was a Marlin MN25 bolt-action .22 LR. I remember opening the box and being so surprised and happy that I cried. Opening that box opened a whole new world. I will never forget those days, and the lessons that came with them.

I'm older now, with a family of my own, and with true enthusiasm and excitement for the woods. I enjoy hunting all game, but I truly love the woods. I didn't realize this until a couple of years ago, when I found I had too many hobbies and not enough time for them all. I needed to focus on one, but wasn't sure what that one was. I wanted to be able to be active in it no matter what the weather, or time of day. I also wanted my family to be able to participate if they felt the urge.

A day or two later, I went into my old bedroom at Dad's and saw the 9-point rack hanging on the wall. It reminded me of watching that buck in October when I was 10. I remembered it like it was yesterday. That deer stayed on schedule all season, right up until it crossed paths with my dad, who was standing along that same trail at a stand I had picked for him the Sunday before the season.

With Sako in hand, he took that deer on the first day of buck season in 1982. I remembered looking at him, amazed, just like I had done the year before, but more so. After all, this was a buck.

Like the smell of an old cigar reminding me of groundhog hunting with Dad, seeing the rack took me right back to that mountainside. It was then I realized I could not stay out of the woods.

This thought was like a revelation. I wondered when I became so engrossed with hunting. It was then that I learned that out of all my hobbies, the one thing I knew I was . . . the thing I became . . . when that buck stood in front of me 30 feet away . . . was a sportsman.

Some of us have probably never thought of the question, much less asked it to ourselves. The answer for me was on that bedroom wall. The day I saw that animal in its own world was the day I became a sportsman.

Do you know when, or why, you became a sportsman, and if you do, have you shared that lesson with your loved ones? This lesson is something I will never forget, and will always share with my kids, along with the lessons my dad shared with me. I only hope I do as good a job teaching my little sportsmen as my dad did teaching me. □

Super Funds for

By Lori D Richardson
Wildlife Education Specialist

JUNE 16th — three days after the passing of one of the National Wild Turkey Federation's and Pennsylvania's finest — Jerry Zimmerman. Jerry was well known throughout Pennsylvania's conservation community for his optimistic approach and commitment to wild turkey management and hunting heritage. It's only fitting that I am out in the field today learning how dedication like his gets put to work on the ground through the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Super Fund program.

In the parking lot at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area I chat with NWTF Regional Biologist Bob Eriksen about good friends and good times. Southeast Land Management Officer Rich Skubish arrives shortly to escort us on a tour of Super Fund projects on State Game Lands of the southeast.

Eriksen has been a Regional Biologist for NWTF for four years. His territory includes Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware, however, the NWTF State Chapter and the PGC primarily fund his position, so his priority is assisting the Commission with wild turkey management.

Skubish has worked for the Commission since 1977 and has spent 21 of those years as an LMO. Today he'll be showing us some of the habitat enhancement projects he's completed and is working on.

As we turn in next to a Game Lands building we meet some of the maintenance workers whose labor puts Super Funds on the ground. Eriksen tells Skubish, "I've spent 29 years with other natural resource agencies and never seen anyone be able to do the habitat work that you all do. I know it's working because we're seeing more turkeys. I'm really impressed and I hope hunters recognize and appreciate the hard work." He adds, "The folks out in the field are really putting in a lot of effort."

The Hunting Heritage Super Fund was established in 1983 and is a combination of monies from fundraising banquets and corporate sponsorships. Super Funds have enabled NWTF to work with state and provincial agencies to promote wild turkey restoration throughout North America. The habitat work, however, helps many plants and animals, and provides numerous recreational opportunities for hunters and non-hunters alike.

Since 1985, more than $3.7 million has been raised and spent in the commonwealth. The majority is spent on habitat enhancements such as maintaining and developing brood habitat, planting trees, seed subsidies, creating forest openings and purchasing equipment. Other monies are spent on scholarships, teacher workshops, field days, and hunter education. Super Funds also support wildlife management and law enforcement by funding research and land acquisition, and supplying equipment such as scales and surveillance cameras.

In 2004 NWTF spent more than $190,000 on 60 habitat enhancement projects in Pennsylvania. The impact was felt in 48 counties on nearly 2,500 acres of land open to public hunting, and the NWTF makes similar large donations on an annual basis.

In 2005, 66 projects totaling $164,394, enhanced the commonwealth's wild turkey habitat. Because of the intense interest of

Southeast Spurs

LMOs and local NWTF chapters, 46 of those projects and more than $83,971 were spent on State Game Lands.

Most of the Super Fund money is raised at banquets held by local chapters. Pennsylvania has the seventh largest membership base, with 72 local chapters encompassing more than 22,000 volunteers.

Eriksen says, "I get to meet a lot of chapter members at banquets and I can hardly believe the commitment these guys have. They're so focused on improving habitat and they put in countless volunteer hours educating, fund raising and doing habitat work." He adds, "Local banquets also allow conservation-minded individuals, who are unable to invest a lot of time, a way to contribute to wild turkey management."

The LMOs foster good relationships with local chapters and often attend several local banquets each year. Many submit Super Fund requests annually. LMOs and other staff determine what the limiting factors are for turkeys in an area they are working in. Then, after creating a habitat enhancement plan, they apply to NWTF for funding. NWTF reviews the applications and selects projects to support.

Once a project is approved, LMOs often make arrangements to help stretch their Super Fund dollars by coordinating with timber companies, local logging crews and school groups. As a result, they are able to enhance more habitat and keep PGC costs down.

At SGL 156, our first stop, the limiting factor for turkeys is the availability of openings in the forest where birds can forage. Less than one percent of 156 is considered this type of habitat. In the spring and early summer, when poults (young turkeys) are growing, they need lots of protein. Small forest openings are great brood habitat. The turkeys feel safe being close to escape cover and the legumes and grasses are perfect for buggin' (gleaning protein-rich insects from the grasses).

Skubish has been using Super Funds to create openings by clearing the forest; planting grasses, legumes and fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs; and maintaining the openings over time. Once an opening is established, it must be maintained with annual mowing and lime and fertilizer every three to five years.

Roadways created while logging the



RICH SKUBISH (right), Southeast LMO picks the brain of Bob Eriksen, NWTF Regional Biologist discussing wild turkey management on SGL 156 in Lancaster County.





GAME LANDS maintenance workers, Michael Backel (left) and Dave Shultz (below) clear a section of SGL 242 in York County. They are preparing the site to plant strips of annual and perennial grasses, clover and conifer blocks to enhance wild turkey habitat.

openings make travel corridors between them. A series of three or four small openings connected with travel corridors totaling about 10 acres provides fine turkey habitat. In some of the wider roadways, sawtooth oak and crabapples can be planted for fall and winter food. Keeping travel lanes vegetated and mowing them late in the season provides both cover and foraging areas. While mowing the boarder openings early in the season creates short grass that is good brood habitat. Clover and trefoil are good for areas like this; if they are a little sparse in the spring, the poults are able to move through it without much trouble.

"People often don't consider that if they already have openings, just mowing them once a year will keep exotics like autumn olive and multiflora rose out. You don't have to create new openings if you maintain the ones you have.

Eriksen especially liked the openings Skubish has been implementing that get lots of sunlight because they are good for the spring green-up and also for winter growth, providing valuable habitat components year-round.

In larger openings Skubish had planted scattered sawtoothed oaks and crabapples and Eriksen suggests mowing underneath each tree because the shorter, mowed vegetation makes it easy for birds to find fallen fruit and mast.

The second limiting factor on most SGLs is good winter forage habitat — fruit bearing trees and shrubs or corn and sorghum for when the snow cover is deep. Managing places where groundwater springs to the surface, encouraging herbaceous vegetation and melting the snow, can offer winter food, especially where mast falls near the seeps. In the future, conifer stands, which provide winter thermal cover, may turn out to be a limiting factor.

We visit several projects on other Game Lands and discuss how the hunting pressure in this part of the state is heavy at times because of the proximity to highly populated areas. There are often hundreds of cars in parking areas during deer season and a fair amount during spring gobbler as well.

At our final stop, SGL 242 in York County, there is a mix of agricultural land and forest. This project began last year. Over eight acres of old, overgrown orchard

In LMO Skubish's district, the Delaware County Longbeards, Red Rose, Blue Mountain, Mason Dixon and Laurel Lonbeards chapters of NWTF have funded projects on SGLs 43, 52, 156 and 242 in Chester, Lancaster and York counties. Nearly 50 acres of openings have been created.

are being stumped to create a clearing with strips of annual and perennial grasses and clovers and conifer blocks. We watch as Game Lands maintenance workers Dave Schultz and Michael Backel clear out locust and multi-flora rose. They tell us about seeing hens out here in the evening and Eriksen notes that the location is excellent for brooding and foraging and, hence, a great place to enhance habitat.

Skubish explains that the PGC supplements these openings with food plots on more than 75 acres and concludes, "All the stuff we're doing, we wouldn't be able to do without NWTF Super Funds. The funding helps us enhance and then maintain the habitat; it is a real good partnership for us. NWTF has created a nice, diverse habitat that's good for ALL wildlife."

I didn't know Jerry Zimmerman personally, but I understand that he never failed to make a point of saying "Thank you," to folks working toward the conservation of wild turkeys. I think he would have been proud to see the fruits of his chapters' Super Fund projects enhancing wild turkey habitat on State Game Lands and providing outdoor opportunities for all Pennsylvanians. I believe he would have shaken the hand of LMO Skubish along with each Game Lands employee we met and thanked them for their hard work.

Thank you, Jerry, for your dedication and leadership. Your legacy is great and Pennsylvania is greater for it. ☐

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You Only Have to See One Once

By Richard Tate

SOME OF MY FRIENDS can't understand that bagging a wild turkey during the autumn is a real challenge for me. With the large flocks of birds that now roam much of the Keystone State, they believe all you have to do is walk into the woods, sit down and call a little, and then kill a turkey that comes running. Some of these friends are hunters who actually seem to do this. Out of a sense of pity, or compassion, they often tell me where turkeys are hanging out and how to approach them. In fact, when my dad and I got back to my pickup to shift locations on a recent fall opener, I had a note from a friend who'd already killed a turkey, telling me where the flock was. However, when I got there, the birds were gone, and although I hunted hard all day, I failed to locate the sizable flock he'd described in his note.

A hunter I work with described his first day experience the following Monday: "I went to the woods where I hunt for deer and sat down. I heard some shooting, and soon a turkey came running up to me and I shot it."

I hear many similar tales, and for these hunters, fall hunting seems to be an easy way to put a bird on the Thanksgiving Day table. Not for me.

For me, most autumn turkey seasons involve a lot of legwork just to find birds. For example, during both of the past two autumns, I put a lot of time into scouting prior to the season. The first autumn I realized there weren't many flocks of young birds because of the cold, wet spring. This past autumn, though, I discovered several large flocks of young turkeys. The night





before the opener I located a flock, and figured they'd be back in the morning to feed on the grapes on the knob where I had seen them. Both my dad, whom I had persuaded to come, and I were disappointed when the turkeys decided to not show up. During both of these autumns I hunted hard. I was in the woods every evening after work, but not once did I run into the birds.

On the Saturdays and the few vacation days I had, I spent the entire days hunting, covering miles of ground, including some steep, rocky mountainsides that had held turkeys in prior seasons. By the end of both turkey seasons, my legs were in fine physical condition. However, it was discouraging not to find many turkeys, and when I did see birds, they were racing away from me in the distance. When I was complaining about this to my dad one evening, he reminded me, "Rich, that's fall hunting. You go days without finding any turkeys and then all of a sudden you run into them. You have to see one only once to be successful. You have to be persistent."

If I possess one positive quality as a turkey hunter, it's persistence. No matter how discouraged I get I keep telling myself that the law of averages will catch up if I put in enough time, that I have to get a turkey at a disadvantage only once to be successful. This is exactly what happened during both of the past two autumns.

Neither of these success stories involved the traditional scatter-and-call-back technique. I have not been able to "break" an autumn flock for a several years. Instead, I persistently hunted till I ran into birds that I had at a disadvantage.

Two autumns ago, we had a 3-week season in my bailiwick, which was fortunate for me. Things had been tough, and I was down to my last day to hunt when my dad told me he had seen three gobblers the previous afternoon. "You could try them first thing in the morning," he advised. "I'm not going to hunt."

So, that's what I did, but the old toms didn't show. I was on a mountain that was not real familiar to me, so I decided to hunt along an old woods road, stopping to set up and call for a half hour every so often. Although I found old sign, I failed to find the turkeys. At noon I decided to climb to the top of the mountain and then hunt my way back along the top to the section of woods where I had begun. I sat and called till dark, hoping one of the gobblers Dad had seen the previous day would appear. As I crested the top of the mountain I spotted a flock of 10 or 12 birds busily scratching less than 30 yards away. They hesitated, though, giving me time to draw down on the closest bird, a small hen. Although I had a 3-mile hike back to my truck, it was a good



feeling to be carrying a turkey out of the woods.

Last autumn's success story was somewhat different. Again, I had been experiencing some bad luck. It seems I was a day or two behind the turkeys and well into the second week I had seen only four birds. Those four would not respond to my calls, and when I tried to loop ahead to intercept them, they spotted me and escaped.

Finally, on the evening before Veterans Day, I found day-old scratching that appeared to have been made by a large flock, heading uphill to the point of a mountain. I figured I would hunt the mountain the next day, and I knew I had to make a 2-mile hike in the dark over an old logging trail to get to the knob where I wanted to be at daybreak.

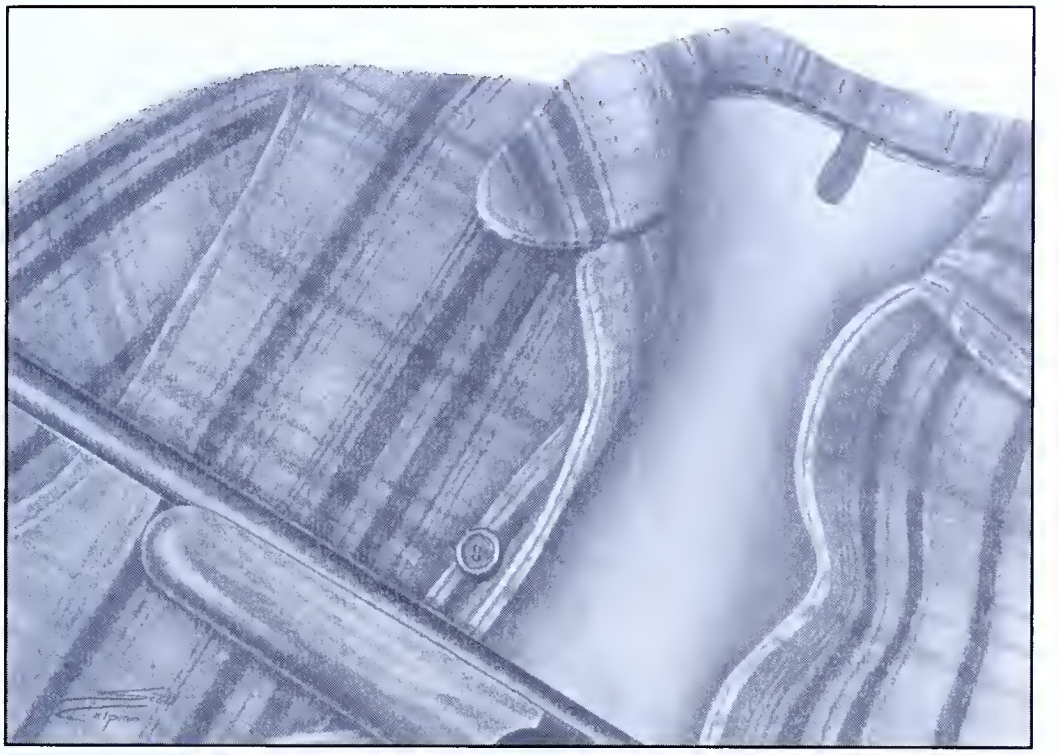
I admittedly had a little trouble getting started the next morning, and I was about 15 minutes late getting to the parking area where I wanted to start from. At 6:45 it was already getting light and I was still a couple knobs away from where I wanted to be. I was lucky to be late, however, because I heard a turkey yelp from an embankment below me to my left. I hustled to get set up, expecting to call a turkey in from the left through an open area of woods.

I made my first call and was answered by a couple of coarse clucks and yelps from at least two different birds from the other side of a shallow dip to the right of where I'd been standing when I'd heard the first call. I had probably misidentified the location of the first calls and figured I had blown it.

I was doubtful I could call the turkeys across the little ravine, which was thick with greenbriers, grapevine and deadfalls. I had to try, though, so I swiveled around to face across the dip and sent out some soft yelps from my diaphragm call. One turkey replied with an odd-sounding 2-note yelp, and the other answered in a series of five or six conventional yelps. I had figured they were already on the ground, but shortly after their response, I saw one glide down from a tree and land just out of sight behind some grapevines.

Then I noticed two turkeys slowly weaving their way toward me through the thicket, and I decided not to call anymore, as they were easily within 50 yards. It wasn't going to be easy getting a shot at either bird in the thick stuff, but when the lead bird stopped with its head and neck showing between a couple of saplings about 30 yards away, I lined up on its neck and pulled the trigger. The 12-gauge boomed and the turkey flopped backwards into a tangle of grapevines. I jumped up and hustled to the downed turkey.

After tagging the plump 13-pound jake and sipping a cup of coffee before toting him out, I realized that what my father had told me was true: You have to see a turkey only once to be a successful turkey hunter. □



Hunting is, and always has been, a special, almost sacred, time spent with family and friends.

One More Day Afield

By John H. Sherry

FOR HIM, that fall (his 89th) would be unlike any of those before. Ever since he was a boy he looked forward to the fall as a time of peace and tranquility in the dense woods of northwestern Pennsylvania. Different from the spring days spent fishing, fall offered the unbelievable beauty of the turning leaves and the all too familiar breeze of the upcoming winter. It had always been a time best spent with family, listening to the rhythmic howl of a beagle chasing a cottontail, or methodically following the tracks of a big whitetail during a well-planned drive, creating bonds as unbreakable as a loving hug — and just as unforgettable, too.

Time had now begun to take its hold on the old carpenter's frame. Simply walking through the woods, once the easiest and most pleasurable parts of hunting, became difficult and exhausting. The usual "sun up til sun down" hunt had been

reduced to a few brief hours in the morning that led to afternoons of storytelling about days gone by.

As a teacher, I occasionally go hunting through the week when school is out. It was the eve of one such day that I asked my grandfather if he would like to do some rabbit hunting. His reply was simply, "Stop over in the morning and we'll see what the weather is doing." The weather, in years past a non-issue, had now become one of the single most important factors. Rainy, cool days meant sore legs and the possibility of catching a cold. Hunting now seldom took place on such days.

As luck would have it, the next morning turned out to be the best of days. The sky was as clear as a running brook, the sun as warm as an evening campfire. I arrived at Grandpa's house about 8:30, expecting to find him just awake and eating breakfast. As I rounded the corner to the kitchen, I paused for a moment. There was Grandpa, at the kitchen table, finishing his usual bowl of cereal with chunks of banana sliced in it and a cup of coffee. He was dressed in his dark brown "duck pants," already wearing his rubber hunting boots. On a nearby chair was his walking stick, the familiar red and black checkered Woolrich coat and his thorn-scratched sun- bleached 12-gauge. His fluorescent orange hat and hunting vest were laying nearby. Surely a hunt was in the cards for today.

I entered the room, quickly drawing Grandpa's attention. We shared the usual greetings typical of a Saturday hunt. The weather, how he was feeling, and where we were going were discussed, which naturally led to a serious conversation about where we should begin.

Grandpa, almost instinctively, as if he had been planning his response all morning, suggested hunting at Troha's camp, one of his favorite sites. A beautiful camp nestled next to a marvelous railroad trestle, (a unique architectural structure full of elegance built in the early 1900s), provided an almost picturesque location for the day's outing. Alongside the trestle is a large field bordered on each shoulder by dense patches of goldenrod and briars. Perfect rabbit country. Splendor not withstanding, the site was also perfect in Grandpa's eyes, because it provided steady footing for him. He could simply walk the field while others beat the brush, all within earshot of passing conversations. Surely this spot of many years would courteously tip its hat once more in compliance with Grandpa's desire for an enjoyable hunt.

While Grandpa was rounding up his gear, I dashed out the back door, ran through the yard past his extensive garden and over to the dog coup. Amber, his beagle, sensing the coming hunt, had been jumping and barking since I arrived. She is a small dog, full of energy, and just as skilled at the hunt as the any of the previous generations of dogs Grandpa has trained over the years.

The drive, which normally took 15 minutes, lasted about 25, not because Grandpa was driving (he was a notorious slow driver), but because there was no hurry. I soaked up every minute of the conversation. We talked mostly of past hunts, many of which occurred long before I was born and took place right where the houses we were passing now stood. We spoke of hunting partners, mostly family, who had long since passed. More importantly we spent time together, alone. It was an opportunity that seldom opens and even less often is grabbed.

The details of the hunt are many, all of which I will carry with me forever, few

of which I desire to share now. I will say we hunted that sunny autumn day like no other since. (Not just in the morning but straight through to early evening, with Grandpa sneaking only a short nap while I was running the dog on a steep hillside). We traveled to three different locations, each time fully expecting fatigue to set in, but it didn't. I'm not sure if it was God granting his faithful son one more addition to his wealth of treasured days afield, or if it was simply determination on my grandfather's behalf to show he could still carry on. When asked if he was ready to go home, Grandpa would simply say, "We haven't tried here yet," or "How about hitting here first?" It was, at least for one more day, like time had been turned back, like hunts remembered as a boy, when 14 years earlier Grandpa was pushing me on.

When all was said and done, we returned home that day tired as only a day outdoors in the fresh air can make you. Due to Amber's skill, we had three rabbits and a grouse to show for our efforts. My grandfather never fired a shot that day, nor did he truly care to, for he had long since learned that hunting is not about killing but, instead, the enjoyment experienced during the hunt. It is this enjoyment that both of us exchanged and it is such that it cannot be put into words. It, however, can be measured by the laughs, the stories, the thoughts and the memories we shared and made.

The day's experiences provided me with a better understanding and admiration of my grandfather, a greater appreciation of the beautiful outdoors, and a memory that will last as long as I live. For, you see, this is only one example from a list as plentiful as fallen leaves in autumn of how hunting is, and always has been, a special, almost sacred, time spent with family and friends. Hunting provides a chance to walk and talk, trading thoughts and laughs. It's a time to wonder at nature's beauty and, most importantly, a pastime fully dedicated to the establishment of relationships of the everlasting kind.

My grandfather's health continues to decline, but the leaves are turning, the breeze is picking up, both sounding like a trumpet of the coming hunting season. The almost stoic-like gleam in his eyes is returning for another year. Age has not dampened the desire and it cannot dissipate his will to hunt once more. It is that drive and the love of family, of friends, and of nature that have placed a new license on the old hunting vest. □



Big Basin Bruin

By J. Robert Miller

Art by Dwight Kirkland

I WAS 18 when I shot the bear in 1940. In those days getting a bear was a big deal, and it's as close to becoming famous as I've ever come. The .300 Savage Model 99 lever action was brand new, my first high-powered rifle, my pride and joy. I had counted and recounted my savings with each small addition until I reached the magic number that made that rifle in Paul Mickle's general store my own. In one of my dad's back fields I was knocking tin cans off fence posts with respectable regularity, and by fall I was full of confidence.

I don't know what the bear kill was in 1940 (524), but very few were brought home to our neighborhood in those days. Several hunters from our area made the long trip up north to Cameron County, and even though they usually returned empty-handed, just the thought of such an adventure thrilled me.

Fall came and another group of hunters planned a trip north. There were six of us, all the others older and more experienced than me, but that didn't dampen my enthusiasm. It didn't take long to pack; my equipment locker wasn't overloaded in those days. Arrangements for room and board were made with one of the local farm families, the Geelans, who lived on top of the steep hill above Howard Siding. Mrs. Geelan knew how to take care of hunters; her table groaned with food and there were layers of quilts for her cold bedrooms. We settled in after the lengthy trip from Bedford County and made ready for opening day.

When we left the house the next morning we were greeted with several

inches of snow. We drove out Hicks Run and unloaded on a side road just beyond the game protector's house, crossed the stream and headed up the hill into the Big Basin.

During the day we took turns driving and watching the thick laurel and steep hillsides, and I remember standing watch on a tram road not far from the top of a ridge when I heard cracking brush up behind me. Turning, I spotted a bear running on a trail, and then it turned downhill and headed full tilt for the bottom of the hollow. With snow as a background, the bear was easy to find in the rifle's open sights and it dropped at my shot.

At home we hung it from the tripod poles we used on hog butchering day, its glossy black pelt glistening in the sunshine, and word soon spread throughout the neighborhood. All day people came and looked, and the next day, too. Some were anxious to see a bear for the first time and others asked for some of the belly fat to render for salve — known for treating winter-cracked, chapped hands. They marveled at the heavy coat at the back of the bear's neck, the size of the 2-inch claws and the broad square head. In Geelan's barn the scale had put its weight at more than 300 pounds.

A black bear today isn't the rarity it was 60 years ago. The thrill of the trophy is there, I'm sure, but the interest that captured my neighborhood's attention in those days was something to remember. At a recent gathering of old friends someone said, "Hey, you're the guy who killed that big bear up north one time, aren't you?"

And his neighbor joined in, "Yea, that's right. I remember we had a tough old roast off that bear."

At 82, taking that bear still ranks high on my lifetime list of accomplishments, and the story of that bear seems to have developed a life of its own. The mount of that trophy that drew so much attention in the fall of 1940 still retains its favored position on my wall, a prized reminder of how I became famous, if only temporarily, on that long ago snowy day in the wilds of Cameron County. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Beast of Never, Cat of God: The search for the eastern puma, by Bob Butz, Lyons Press, 246 Goose Lane, P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437, 800-962-0973, www.LyonsPress.com, 280 pp., $22.95, hardbound. Mystery and intrigue surround the mountain lion more than probably any other animal in North America. It's widely believed that mountain lions, pumas or whatever name you want to call them, were driven from nearly all of the eastern U.S. more than a hundred years ago, but reports of this extremely elusive animal continue to surface, leading to all forms of speculation that remnant populations remain. Bob Butz, a former Pennsylvanian and occasional *Game News* contributor, joined in the search for the eastern cougar in Michigan. In a most thorough and objective account, Butz covers the efforts of the people convinced these animals do exist, the official positions of the agencies convinced they don't, and the social ramifications of all those caught in between, along with adding his own most provocative insights. In very many respects, the status of the mountain lion in Michigan is the same as in Pennsylvania and other eastern states, making this a most relevant book for all those interested in this animal and the controversy surrounding it.



Neon Leaves

By Chuck Fergus

IN MOST broad-leafed trees — maples, birches, hickories, oaks — it's probably no more than a happy coincidence that their leaves change to bright pleasing colors in the fall. In some other trees, however, a distinct reason lies behind the brilliant autumnal display: to attract wildlife.

Take the black gum, for example. Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is also known as tupelo and pepperidge. The leaves of this generally smallish tree are two to five inches long, have smooth edges, and end in a pointed tip. They have a firm, somewhat leathery texture and grow crowded on short twigs that project from the sides of the branches. The branches jut out perpendicular to the trunk, giving the black gum a distinctive silhouette, especially in winter.

In summer, black gum leaves are a glossy tropical green. But by mid-September they have already begun to turn colors, at a time when the leaves of most other forest trees remain green. Most field guides describe the black gum's fall foliage as scarlet; in fact, different trees set forth a range of exclamatory hues: lemon yellow, salmon orange, orange-red, maroon and scarlet. In some leaves the colors burn along the central stalk and the radiating ribs, while the rest of the blade remains green.

The bright colors remind me of neon billboards outside country restaurants. Like the billboards, the leaves act as

advertisements to passing birds. The birds notice the bright colors, and then discover the trees' newly ripened fruit. What is the payoff for the trees? After the fruits' seeds pass through avian digestive tracts, they are expelled in bird droppings, often hundreds of yards or even several miles away.

The fruits of black gum stand in twos and threes at the ends of long, curved stems. They are blue-black, oval, pea-size, and consist of a thin pulp covering a slightly ridged stone. When I first tasted one many years ago, I spat the bitter thing out immediately; yet many birds and some mammals relish them.

The fat content of black gum fruits exceeds 14 percent — considerably higher than the fruits of American holly (8 percent), mountain ash (4.6 percent fat), and hackberry (4.4 percent). Fats provide almost twice as many calories as sugars, making them ideal for birds that must burn large amounts of energy but cannot afford to weigh themselves down by gorging on great quantities of food.

I have watched blue jays, catbirds, robins, wood thrushes, scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks clambering around in our black gums, nipping off fruits. Other observers report wood ducks, crows, mockingbirds, brown thrashers, cardinals, grackles, starlings, Baltimore orioles, hermit thrushes and veeries dining on the fruits, and warblers and vireos nabbing flying insects attracted to the ripe harvest.

Ecologists have coined a term, "foliar fruit flagging," for plants' use of bright foliage to advertise food availability. They note that in the eastern deciduous forest the peak ripening of bird-disseminated fruits coincides with the peak migration of fruit-eating birds.

Other trees and shrubs also display showy colors in early autumn. The leaves of spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) turn bright yellow then. This shrub packs its red fruits with up to 50 percent fat. That's a major investment of energy on the part of the plant, but one that apparently yields a profitable return — witness the abundance of spicebush in wooded bottomlands from Maine to Florida.



The leaves of flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) become wine-red with pink undersides. In a breeze, they flash like semaphore signals. The scarlet fruits stand up in clusters of two to five, practically begging to be eaten by birds, and have a fat content of 16 to 24 percent. More than 36 species of birds eat dogwood

fruits.

The showy leaves of sassafras — turning yellow, orange, rose and red — proclaim the tree's high quality fruit, a favorite of quail, wild turkeys, several flycatcher species, catbirds and many others. Alternate-leafed dogwood (which has blue fruit), Virginia creeper (a tree-hugging vine), and the magnolias, including cucumbertree magnolia, also use brilliant foliage to tout their fat-charged fruits.

Fruits are critically important to migrating birds that don't have the time to spend hunting insects (insect numbers have dwindled by this time of year, anyway) and who would be slowed down — becoming easier prey — if they stuffed themselves with food that did not reward them as bountifully. Pennsylvania naturalist Scott Weidensaul writes in *Mountains of the Heart*, his book on nature in the Appalachians, "It is hard to imagine how some songbirds would manage their two thousand mile trips without a ready supply of fruit along the way."

It's not just migrating birds that eat the fat-stocked fruits. I have watched out my office window as, about five feet away, a pileated woodpecker bounced up and down on the springy outer boughs of a black gum, picking off the fruits one by one with its great bill. (At times like that, I'm particularly glad that I had the excavator work around that weedy-looking tree when digging the foundation for our house addition.) Smaller woodpeckers, ruffed grouse and wild turkeys also dine on the fruits.

Mammals get into the act as well. At Bear Meadows Natural Area, on state forest land in southern Centre County, many tall sturdy black gums grow in saturated soil at the edge of a bog. I've visited the area many times over the years, but I first looked critically at its ecology while researching my book, *Natural Pennsylvania* (Stackpole Books, 2002), an exploration of the state forest natural area system.

From what I can tell, the big black gums at Bear Meadows are probably several centuries old. (Black gums have twisted, cross-grained wood that probably spared these specimens from being logged in the early 1900s.) In September and October, black bears climb high into the trees and gorge on the fruits, whose seeds are packed by the hundreds in the



bruins' droppings; perhaps this is why the area is known as Bear Meadows. I doubt the bears are drawn to the black gums' bright leaves; more likely, they smell the ripe fruit. Their droppings may not help in dispersing seeds, but the trees are large and produce bumper crops, so the birds still find plenty to eat despite the bears' gluttony.

Black gum fruits hold their greatest food value in early autumn. If they remain on the stem, microbes may invade and make them less acceptable to birds. Birds can't always afford to be picky, however, and on bitter February days I've watched as small flocks of bluebirds descended on the black gums on our land and cleaned up all the shriveled fruits remaining on the twig tips. Maybe the fruits were life savers at a time of year when pickings are slim.

Black gums offer many benefits to a variety of animals. Old black gums usually die from the top down, so the trees become shorter as they age. Wounds caused by fires or broken branches let wood decay fungi enter the trunk. Trees two or more feet in diameter often are hollow, their trunks still alive even though their walls are only a few inches thick. Woodpeckers, wood ducks, hooded mergansers, squirrels and raccoons nest in hollow black gums; owls spend the daylight hours there. Bears hibernate in cavities of really big trees during winter.

One of the most enjoyable spectacles of the eastern deciduous forest is the color change in autumn. When days become shorter and the amount of light dwindles, leaves shut down their energy-producing process, photosynthesis. As their green chlorophyll deteriorates, hidden pigments in the leaves are revealed, and the forest becomes a kaleidoscope of bright colors set against the abiding green of needle-leaved pines and hemlocks.

From the time I was a child, I have stood in awe of trees — and not just the huge, impressive ones but also the multitudinous scraggly types such as black gum. All trees have stories to tell, tactics to understand. Trees are plants, to be certain, but sometimes they seem to have minds of their own. Clearly they have strategies — embedded in their genes, if not in an intellect — to help them survive and prosper. Trees cannot pick up their feet and wander, or flap their wings and fly. But by enlisting the help of birds and mammals, they can travel through the dispersal of their seeds, promoted by the fanfare of their brilliant leaves. □

Contacting the Region Offices

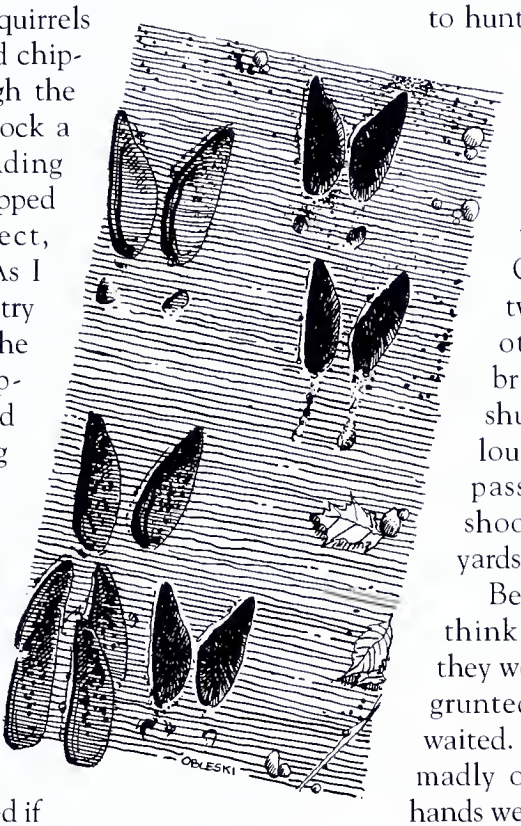
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TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals.** All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.


October
Magic

IT WAS UNUSUALLY warm for the second week of October. The air was thick with humidity and the smell of ferns and acorns. The sun baked down on me through the trees, and I felt like I should be wearing a swimsuit instead of camouflage clothing.

I climbed into my treestand after school, at about 4 o'clock, anticipating three hours of hunting. Most of that time was spent watching squirrels chase each other and chipmunks scurry through the leaves, and at 6 o'clock a red fox came bounding through. The fox stopped below me, ears erect, sniffing the wind. As I leaned to my left to try and get a better look, he jerked his head upwards, spotted me, and was a red blur darting back into the brush. Slowly the chipmunks re-emerged from hiding and resumed their games. About a half-hour later they decided to call it a day and retired to their dens. I wondered if I should do the same.



So far, my first bowhunting season had been much like the weather — very dry. It was frustrating, trying to figure out where the deer were going and why. Due to the warm weather, the deer weren't moving much. Finding the active trails and best treestand locations had become quite a challenge. I was used to rifle hunting, so trying to get deer within 20 yards was a whole new ordeal. All I could do was keep trying.

I took up bowhunting because I wanted to try something new, and I liked the idea of tagging my deer before the weather turned cold. I also wanted to be part of the passion and tradition associated with bowhunting. I quickly realized, however, that becoming a successful bowhunter was a status I would have to earn. Also, it was the first deer season I'd been able to hunt on my own, and I expected nothing short of success.

While I was debating whether or not to start the long walk home on that October evening, a twig snapped on the other side of some brush. The sound of shuffling leaves grew louder, and two deer passed through my shooting lane only 15 yards away.

Before I could even think to draw my bow, they were in brush again. I grunted a few times and waited. My heart thumped madly out of control. My hands were cool and clammy and my mouth was dry. I closed my eyes and silently whispered over and over, "Please come back. Please!" And for no apparent reason, the smaller of the two deer stepped back into the narrow opening, perhaps catching a faint hint of the red fox that had stood there less than an hour before.

Using all the willpower a 16-year-old could muster, I drew, settled the pin on the deer's chest and released.

By Ralph Scherder

The sound of the arrow passing through the deer seemed to echo down into the river bottom. Leaves and dirt scattered as the deer ran down the hollow, and my ears strained to hear the fading sounds.

I clambered out of the tree and ran to where the deer had stood. My arrow was stuck in the ground on the other side of the trail, covered with blood. With darkness coming on fast, I left all my gear and went home to get my dad.

After trudging through endless corn stubble and across wheat fields, I stumbled into the house. My family sat at the dinner table staring at me strangely, as I gasped for breath. So many thoughts were racing through my mind, I didn't know what to say.

"Get one?" Dad asked.

I nodded.

"Buck or doe?"

"Doe," I squeaked.

He frowned slightly. He'd hoped I would shoot a buck and leave my antlerless tag unfilled; he was a little old-fashioned in that respect, believing that only bucks should be harvested. I didn't have time to debate the deer management issue, but as soon as he realized how happy I was just to get a deer, he asked, "Was it a good hit?"

"Seemed like it," I said.

I skipped dinner and by the time we set out for the woods it was getting late. We reached the spot where the deer had stood, and I showed Dad the blood-soaked arrow. He examined it and nodded, but didn't say anything, which wasn't a good sign.

At first the trail was easy to follow, as large puddles of dark red blood were evident for 50 or 60 yards. Gradually, however, the drops became smaller, turned to specks, and then stopped altogether. The hit wasn't as good as I had thought. We probed the ground like opossums seeking a late-night snack, but couldn't find any more blood. As we sneaked through the brush, Dad suddenly grabbed my arm. "Wait!" he said. "Do you hear something?"

I stopped and listened. I heard the wind sweeping through the trees and the branches slapping against each other, but then I tuned beyond that and heard the faint *crunch crunch crunch* of footsteps in the autumn leaves.

"That's the deer," Dad said. "We're pushing it."

"What should we do?" I asked. I'd never trailed a deer that had been shot with an arrow. My only other tracking experience was in the snow two years earlier, when my uncle and I followed a buck I'd shot on the rifle season opener.

Dad and I stood there in the growing darkness, debating what to do. I replayed the shot I'd made over and over in my mind. Why didn't I aim more carefully? I should've taken just a little more time. I knew I had to accept the shot and the outcome of my actions — whatever it may be. The hardest thing to accept, though, was when Dad said, "Let's get out of here and come back tomorrow morning." I knew it was for the best, however. If we kept trailing, we'd only push the deer farther. If we left now there was still a chance the deer would bed down and we'd find her in the morning.

Morning came none too soon. Dad was already waiting for me in the kitchen, guzzling his third cup of coffee. His eyes were big as saucers from lack of sleep, and I could tell he was just as anxious as I was to get in the woods. On the trail again we found no more blood and began making sweeps through the area, looking for clues. Fortunately, temperatures had dipped into the low 30s during the night, so the meat would be just fine when — if — we found it. With every hour of arduous searching, I was feeling more and more guilty. It was hard to accept the loss of a deer

due to a less-than-ideal shot. I told Dad that if we didn't find it, I would hang up the bow until I was really ready.

"Don't do that," he said. "It takes woods experience to get better with a bow."

"But this wasn't supposed to happen like this," I said.

The realization of the situation had finally sunk it. Until then, it had only been a feeling I thought would pass. I half expected that we'd just march right into the woods that morning and find the deer with hardly any trouble. As the morning wore on, though, it became more apparent that we wouldn't find the deer.

"Don't give up," Dad said. "We just might find it yet."

My hopes evaporated with the dew at 10 o'clock. Countless times we had circled through the brush with no new sign. Just one clue, I thought, that's all we need — something to point us in the right direction.

Finally we came to a small spring that fed into the river bottom. We were only about 50 yards from where the blood trail had ended the night before, but somehow we had overlooked it. It was mostly an underground spring and only came up to the surface for about 10 yards before seeping back into the earth. We checked it out and found several sets of fresh tracks in the soft mud. One set of tracks was smaller than the rest, though, and I knew a small deer — my deer, made them. We took note of the direction and walked about 20 yards apart real slow through the brush. I don't know how far we went. I only remember that, shortly after 10, Dad hesitated, then stopped and bent over. "I think we have blood here," he said.

I froze and suddenly burned with hope again. Chills went up my spine and my cheeks numbed, as I plowed through the briars to my dad. "Where? Where?" I asked. I scoured every leaf, but still couldn't see any blood. Then Dad pointed to a small opening beneath some low-hanging crabapples where my deer lay. I fell by the deer's side, stroking its soft fur. My fingers seemed to absorb the deer's magic, a magic that crept up my arms and into my young hunter's heart. From then on, I knew I would always be a bowhunter. My vision blurred and I tried to speak, but I just couldn't. □

HUNTERS MAY search for game after sunset and on Sundays only after receiving permission from their local WCO, and they may not possess a sporting arm (firearm, bow and arrow, crossbow) when searching at these times. Hunters attempting to recover wildlife are not permitted to enter private property without permission.

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

The Taxidermist's Son, by Ralph Scherder, Rock Spring Press, 6015 Morrow Street East, Suite 106, Jacksonville, Florida 32217, www.rockspringpress.com, 208 pp., hardcover, $21.95. ***The Taxidermist's Son*** **is a beautifully written story that seemlessly weaves gripping hunting tales with poignant stories about family and friends, all held together with humorous tales from his father's basement taxidermy shop. The author's story centers on his life growing up in rural western Pennsylvania. He portrays the camaraderie among his family, friends and other hunters who stop at the shop. There's always one that got away, but the author makes it evident that what is truly important was right there with you the whole time.**

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by
Bob Sopchick

Tonic and Teacher



I MAKE MY WAY through wet knee high grass down to the river. Fog flows down stream like a pale inverted replica of the river itself. I wade out and dip the bottles into the river. I'll use this water to paint watercolors; the medium of river water mixed with pigments; the river pooling, swirling, eddying once again, painting a portrait of itself.

Bubbles rise as the bottles fill and I look up to see a bald eagle boring through the mist only yards above, flaring dramatically when I stand. The Allegheny is low. It has not rained for several weeks, but heavy rains the day before and into the night have triggered a surge of life in the sere valley, the eagle a noble harbinger of things to come.

An intermittent drizzle dimples the water. I have seen these very same rains before; the first time when my flight was delayed by the storms in Chicago, and once again as I drove west diagonally across Pennsylvania, back into them, to spend a long weekend with friends and fellow outdoor writers Gregg Rinkus, Ben Moyer and Don Feigart at Don's camp in Warren County.



The airport in Chicago was packed with late summer vacationers, the usual business travelers and students

returning to campuses. Many flights were delayed, some more than eleven hours, until the storms drifted northeast. Now, standing in the cool gray-green water, I feel my ragged nerves become river-stone smooth.

Life is more relaxed here. It seems every fiber of my being has assumed the temperament of these gentle waters. Being comprised mostly of water, perhaps it is only natural that our inner currents move in sync with adjacent waters, be it stream, river or sea. Echoes of eternal waves resound yet in blood and sap and fibrous stalk, are held within the skin of berry and tuber, in the chitinous husk of late summer cicadas and moist hulls of ripening hickory nuts.

Old waters wash within. The river softly beckons.



WE HIKE UP the steep state game lands road to the top of the mountain. At first, we don't notice them crossing the dim road, but waves of toads, most only an inch long, traverse the entire hillside, all of them heading uphill. Their numbers are truly staggering; from the bottom of the road to the very top the Lilliputian legions move through the obstacle course of old leaf litter. They are hard to spot with their effective camouflage, and are most visible when they cross a yellow leaf or light stone. Their colors range from a light mustard hue to a medium rich sienna to deep umber. Gregg holds one that poses obediently in his palm while I quickly sketch it. The toads would make a great meal for a wild turkey flock, but the birds might prefer the glut of acorns falling from branches that droop with a tremendous mast crop.

NOT ONLY is the acorn crop promising, but so are the grapes that hang profusely in the tangles behind camp. The elderberry jungle there is also thick and tall, the berries plump and dark. The watercolor of these elderberries was painted with the indigo juice from the berries.

ON OUR WAY UP to the Kinzua tailrace we stop to watch a flock of wild turkeys at the edge of a field. Some are resting in the weeds and they rise and make their way across the grassy clearing. The poults look small, but after several more weeks of feeding on grasshoppers and acorns they will be almost as large as the hen that leads them into the shadows.



Out on the river, in our canoes for a 10-mile afternoon float. The water is both tonic and teacher. Fish may express the heart



of a river, but it is the birds, flying, swimming and diving that illustrate the character of a waterway. Waiting to put in below the dam, we watch vultures boil upwards on kettles of air. Higher above them yet is an eagle, soaring, its dark wings held out like a long straight plank.

CEDAR WAXWINGS flit out over the river from dense shoreline cover, capturing insects, then return, resting momentarily before flying out again. Back and forth they go in a steady relay, with much animation, not unlike the way a flock feeds on the glut of holly berries late in winter in my own backyard.

THE COMMON MERGANSER is aptly named, for we encounter them at every turn. Some are in flight or pattering along the water surface, gaining the necessary momentum to take off. Pairs sun on rocks, and large broods cluster and swim hurriedly to the shadows near shore when we come too near. A merganser raises its breast, then plunges quickly, diving to feed underwater, while another submerges slowly like a submarine in an old war movie. The reddish crest of the females and young catch the sunlight, flashing like sparks against the cool dark background.



OFTENTIMES you hear a kingfisher before you see it, its rattling call like a broken belt slapping the housing on an old engine. Someone once described the kingfisher as "elegant," a term I thought more descriptive of the statuesque great egret instead of the hammer-like kingfisher. Perhaps they were alluding to the kingfisher's crisp glacier-blue and white plumage. I've always thought of it more as a working-class bird in bib overalls. The kingfisher is not only an effective angler, but also an expert miner, excavating a 7-foot long nesting tunnel into a riverbank and lining it with fish bones.



WE TAKE OUT just before the belly of the sagging clouds burst, unleashing a deluge. Ben and I couldn't be any wetter though, after taking a dunking when our canoe plunged into a too-deep trough and opposing rapids flipped us at the head of a long deep pool.

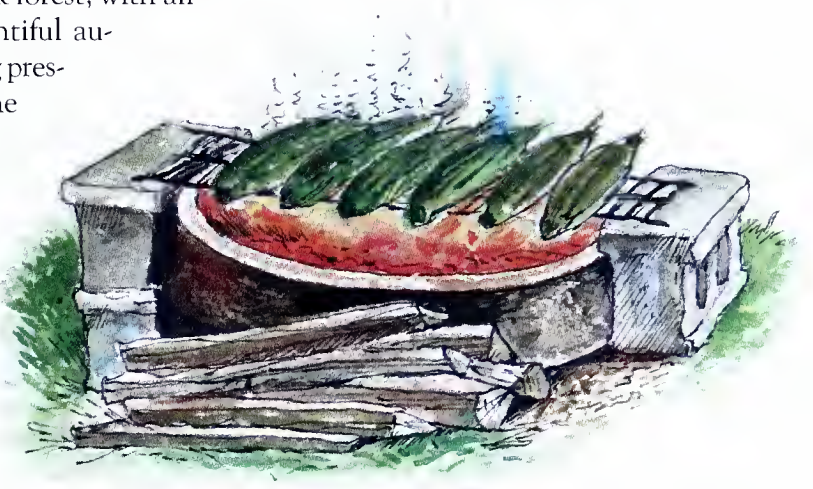


I recall flying above these storms earlier. Below, the clouds bloomed with lighting like Chinese lanterns, while above the stars swarmed and the light of the full moon washed the tops of the clouds in silvery light.

The weather for our outing was generally cooperative, holding off for every excursion afield except for the first evening, when we were relegated to dine on Gregg's steelhead fillets and Don's enormous venison burgers indoors. Undeterred, we spent hours in Don's famous library, discussing new books, reading aloud favorite passages from older books, or referencing points of our conversation. Not so tonight; the Fireside Philosophers, as we have come to call ourselves, would be at fireside reflecting on the day, on life, and enjoying course after course of culinary delights.

Here's how we do it: Each diner has a bowl that serves well for all courses. The meal starts with garden salad, heavy with the last of summer's meaty tomatoes. This is followed by roasted ears of York County sweet corn, fresh from an Amish roadside stand. Roasted in the husk, a few rows of kernels on one side are dark, with the faint taste and aroma of buttered popcorn, while all the rest runs sweet and juicy. Next come the venison backstraps, medium-rare, laid atop slabs of toasted rosemary and olive bread. For dessert, Ben's blueberry pie is washed down with hearty campfire-brewed coffee.

A SCREECH OWL serenades us from the tall dead pines. Its ventriloquist's voice is here, then there, and we think there may be two of them. We mimic the quavering whistles and get an answer every time. A full moon rises between the split trunks of a white pine. During lulls in the conversation one can sense the magnetic presence of the nearby river; the slow pull of the current lingering yet in muscle and mind, that will flow on when eyes are closed. Behind us, the reaches of the deep dark forest, with all the promises of a bountiful autumn, has its own strong presence. We sit here by the fire, suspended in time and space between river and woods, between those entities that have drawn us together as friends, and acknowledge that this is a very good place to be.



FIELD NOTES

Good Independence Day

WARREN — During the July 4 weekend, deputies Jamie Klos, Richard Sarver and I picked up an injured bald eagle, which we dropped off with Suzanne DeArment, who operates the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center. At last report, the eagle was recovering and may soon be released back into the wild.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, PITTSFIELD



Adds Up

PERRY — Many folks questioned terminating the toll-free phone numbers at the region offices and headquarters in Harrisburg to save money. Something that occurred to me after filling up my vehicle with gas, though, was that it cost me $51, which is more than 2½ times what a basic hunting license costs. Need I say more?

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Hot Hawks

I was driving through SGL 322 when I noticed two recently fledged hawks cooling off in a small mud puddle. It seems we're not the only ones who tried to escape the heat and humidity during the summer.

— JUSTIN VREELAND, SC REGION WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Rites of Spring

MCKEAN — During the last week of the spring gobbler season I posted at the junction of several trails in an area frequented by hunters, making sure any passing hunters were wearing their fluorescent orange hats, when a hen turkey with five poults emerged onto the trail. While watching them I heard a noise on the opposite side of the trail and turned in time to see a fawn struggle to its feet. I thought it doesn't get any better than this.

— WCO THOMAS SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Better Than a Longbeard

ERIE — Tim Newara was turkey hunting at SGL 218, set up before dawn at the base of a tree that was on the edge of a marsh. Just before it got light he heard a large bird land in the tree above him. A few minutes later a second bird landed in the tree. The branches shook and so did Tim with excitement, figuring that a couple of toms were right above him and would soon land in the field to feed at first light. When it got light enough to see, Tim noticed the white heads and realized that he was looking at two mature bald eagles.

— WCO LARRY M. SMITH, ERIE

Just Cooling Off

ALLEGHENY — From now on I will be sending my schedule to my neighboring officers so they know when I have days off. It seems WCO Gary Fujak has to go swimming in my district every time I take a day off. One day he rescued two fawns from the cement flood control stream in Turtle Creek, and another day he rescued a deer from the Highland Park Reservoir. Sorry, Gary, but I'll get you a life jacket.

— WCO BETH A. FIFE, VENETIA

Uninformed

YORK — I investigated an incident where a fox grabbed a child by the pant leg. Initially, local police received the call and dispatched the fox and, surprisingly, the father of the child took the fox to a taxidermist. I informed the gentleman that the fox would need to be tested for rabies, so I picked it up at Prowell's taxidermy. When I commented on it being a gray fox, Mr. Prowell told me that the gentleman who had brought it in said, "Oh, I just thought it was a really old red fox that had gotten gray."

— WCO AMY NABOZNY, ROSSVILLE

"Pool-Side"

On one of those hot muggy days in June I noticed several deer wading and feeding along the Delaware River. On a small gravel bar I watched two fawns wade over and lie down in the foot-high grass at its center. They were hidden from view except for their ears, which were constantly moving.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Will Be Missed

BEDFORD — After many years of dedicated service WCOs Tim Flanigan (Bedford County) and John Roller (Huntingdon County) have retired. Their dedication to the wildlife resources, sportsmen and citizens of the commonwealth is commendable. I wish both the best of luck in their retirement.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Call of Duty

BERKS — Three members of the 23rd Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation have served in Iraq. Southeast Federal Aid Supervisor Mike Beahm and Bradford County WCO Vern Perry both did a tour and are now home. WCO Dirk Remensnyder is currently deployed, and our thoughts and prayers are with him and all other members of our armed services members who are serving our country.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, BALLY



Irish Jig

LMO Colleen Shannon gave a good visual interpretation of "ants in your pants" when she came prancing out of her office at the Quehanna crew headquarters. A bee had flown up her pant leg and stung her three times before she got it. She survived; the bee didn't, and we were impressed with how nimble she was on her feet.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORK

Promising

MIFFLIN — Grouse populations seem to be on the rise here, as I've seen more birds during the summer than I have in quite some time. It seems that the improved forest regeneration of the past several years, plus the dry spring, is having a positive impact on ground nesting birds.

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Honeymoon Over?

FRANKLIN — In July, after several years of planning, Deputy Dave Grove finally tied the knot. Dave is a dedicated deputy who loves night patrol, but I was a little surprised when, while walking out of the church, amidst the flying rice, Dave asked me if we were working that night. He was joking, of course, but I wonder how he would have reacted if I had told him we had a big investigation going on that evening. Congratulations Heather and Dave.

— WCO TRAVIS A. PUGH, GREENCASTLE

Pound for Pound . . .

FOREST — I was helping Food and Cover worker Rob Cochran dismantle a beaver dam that was more than 60 yards long and four feet high and was blocking a forestry road, preventing the crew from working on food plots. While Rob was on the bulldozer dismantling the dam, I spotted a large beaver swimming back and forth within 40 yards of Rob, slapping its tail in disapproval. Bulldozer weight: six tons; beaver's: about 60 pounds. Now that's tenacity.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, MARIENVILLE



Wacky Taste Buds

Our tilt-bed truck was leaking antifreeze, and after investigating we discovered teeth marks on two rubber heater hoses. The culprit turned out to be a porcupine. We've had porcupines chew aluminum signs and porch steps at the SGL 39 headquarters building, too.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

One Way or Another

CLARION — I knew before becoming a WCO that there would be challenges, but I never thought writing Field Notes would be one of them. I constantly hear, "that wasn't funny enough," "what were you thinking?" "why don't you have one this month?" Even advice such as, "just lie a little; it may make them funnier." Well, Dad, Mom and brother, Lance, all I can say is I'll try harder.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, CLARION

Be Careful

YORK — During the last two trapping seasons I've had trappers turn in otters that they had trapped by accident. Two were caught in conibear traps set for beavers near the Maryland line and one was caught in a conibear set for raccoons in Lower Windsor Township. Otters now reside in York County; set your traps accordingly.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Wow!

ERIE — During the summer I noticed more turkeys and poults than ever before, probably due to the hot, dry weather during the spring and early summer, which are ideal nesting and poult rearing conditions. On July 27, I counted approximately 34 adult birds and 150 poults.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Will Be Missed

JEFFERSON — This past spring two individuals who have been instrumental in the planning and organization of the annual Youth Field Day event for the past 10 years stepped down from the county Youth Field Day Committee. Without the hard work and dedication of these two individuals hundreds of youngsters would not have benefited from this fun-filled and educational outdoor activity. So, on behalf of the youngsters of Jefferson and surrounding counties who took part in this annual event, all the sportsmen who helped out, the Fish and Boat Commission and the Game Commission, I would like to thank Allen Campbell and Glendora Lindemuth for their hard work and dedication.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Bit Off More Than It Could Chew

FAYETTE — Captain Ron "Crow" Kozak of the Uniontown Police Department told me that he watched a red fox try to make a meal out of a newborn fawn. After six attempts, each repelled by the protective doe, the fox finally trotted off, apparently content to stick to field mice and berries.

— WCO STEPHEN A LEIENDECKER, UNIONTOWN



Happy Ending

DAUPHIN — I got to watch a peregrine falcon that had been shot by dove hunters two years ago being released back into the wild. The young male was one of the first falcons I helped band and was shot in Lancaster County. With the help of Beth and John Carricato, Jack Hubley and Bob Leonard, this falcon was given the chance to again fly free. A special thank you to Mike Caba, who spotted the downed falcon while working for the railroad.

— WCO JASON L. DECOSKEY, MIDDLETOWN

Optimistic Forecast

POTTER — Thanks to favorable weather conditions for nesting and brood survival this year, turkey and grouse numbers seem to be up in my neck of the woods. There also appears to be a bumper crop of red oak acorns, which will benefit many wildlife species.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Gift Wrapped?

WESTMORELAND — At a County Sportsmen's League meeting, two people presented me with staples for my desk stapler, as they had read my Field Note in the August issue stating that after 20 years my original box of staples had finally run out and I had requested a new, 4-year supply. Now I only need a 3-year supply. Thanks, guys.

— WCO RODNEY ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

Win-Win Situation

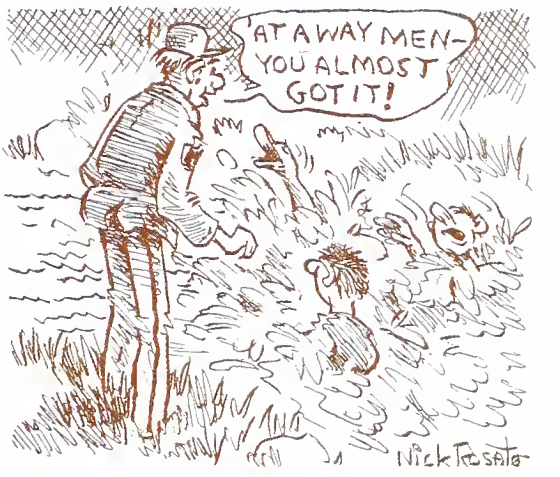
I was reviewing a list of HTE classes submitted to the region office for posting on the PGC website when I noticed that one, the Loop Sportsmen's Club, offers a free 1-year membership to their club to students who pass the course. I sure hope other clubs follow suit, because what better way for new hunters to get the mentoring they need, and the club stands to benefit by gaining a lifelong member.

— I&E SUPERVISOR DONALD K. GARNER, SOUTHCENTRAL REGION OFFICE

Record

MERCER — The eagles using the nest in the propagation area at Shenango Lake fledged three young. This pair had originally nested on an osprey platform, but last year moved to a more secluded site in the nearby woods. This is the largest number of birds to be fledged from the site.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE



Just Floundering Around

LYCOMING — Region biologist Tony Ross and IES Rick Macklem were trying to catch a tundra swan that had taken up residence along Muncy Creek, to relocate it to a more remote location. Tony and Rick looked like a couple of drowned rats, soaking wet from head to toe, after repeated dives to catch the swan. I wasn't much help, either, between laughing and writing this Field Note.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTOURSVILLE



Bullseye

DAUPHIN — On a beautiful July morning I was on Wade Island with Dan Brauning, supervisor of the Commission's Wildlife Diversity Section, and other staff assessing the impact cormorants are having on nesting great egrets and black-crowned night herons. The island was teeming with adults and young of all three species, and the "white-washed" vegetation and fish parts on the ground was our first warning to keep our hats on and to watch where we stepped. When someone commented on a particular nest with several young, Dan looked up and instantly realized he was a goner, taking a direct hit to the face. After we stopped laughing we stepped out from under the trees, while Dan washed his face off in the river. We all agreed that fish and chips was off the list for lunch.

— JOHN MORGAN, SE REGION WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Jumped Out of My Shoes

SNYDER — I was looking over the driver's license and vehicle registration of an individual whom I had stopped for driving across fields on a game lands when I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. I looked down and spotted a rattlesnake near my foot. Needless to say, I moved in a hurry, but then discovered that it was dead. It seems another errant vehicle had recently run over the snake.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE

The Rollin' Pin is Next

MONTGOMERY — Nothing brings out finer terms of endearment than being served with an arrest warrant and relying on your spouse to ante up the fine or allow you to be taken away. One that recently brought a tear to my eye was, "You'd better hope my check got deposited or you're spending the weekend in jail!" Try that one on your guys, ladies.

— WCO TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, FREDERICK

Wonder If He Saw Any Fish?

ELK — I'm often told about the lack of deer here, and although the herd is down some from past years, one thing I have noticed is several species of forest plants that haven't been present for a long time. Recently, while helping waterways conservation officer Bill Crisp check two fishermen in a boat, one, after realizing I was a wildlife conservation officer, remarked, "I've been out here all day and haven't seen a deer yet."

— WCO DOTY A. MCDOWELL, ST. MARYS

Future Mousers

UNION — Hats off to Farm-Game Co-operator Mervin Zimmerman from Hartleton for delaying the withdrawal of cattle feed from his silo so that a pair of barn owls nesting at the top would not be disturbed. Because of Mervin's effort and concern, the pair hatched and raised seven owlets.

— JIM BOOB, FARM GAME COORDINATOR, MILLMONT

Stop, Look and Listen

Recently, on a game lands in my group, I spotted three hens and seven young turkeys, deer, a bear, two yellow phase rattlesnakes, a black rat snake, a box turtle, an indigo bunting, a rufous-sided towhee, ovenbird, black-throated green warbler, red-eyed vireo, hooded warbler, pileated woodpecker, turkey vultures, scarlet tanager, chipping sparrows, black-billed cuckoo, black-and-white warbler and cerulean warbler.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

2005-2006 waterfowl seasons and bag limits

ALREADY begun on September 1, Pennsylvania's migratory game bird seasons go into full swing this month. According to PGC waterfowl biologist John Dunn, the most significant change in this year's waterfowl seasons and bag limits are the changes in the regular Canada goose hunting zones. More significantly, the resident Canada goose zone has been expanded into northeastern Pennsylvania, to provide increased hunting opportunities on resident goose populations.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with our long-held position that the resident Canada goose zone should be expanded to enable hunters to address conflicts with resident Canada goose populations," Dunn said. "At this point, before further expansions will be granted through the federal frameworks, we must wait for the federal environmental impact statement on resident Canada geese.

"With the zone changes, hunters need to check the zone descriptions to ensure that they are following the appropriate seasons and bag limits for the specific area they plan to hunt in."

Other boundary changes include modifications to the Pymatuning, Southern James Bay and Atlantic population zones. Season lengths and bag limits, however, remain similar to last year.

Also, white-fronted geese may now be taken in Pennsylvania. This species of goose is becoming more prevalent in the state, and this change by the USFWS will allow for the incidental taking of this species during Canada goose seasons.

As announced in the September *Game News*, the early statewide season for resident Canada geese opened Sept. 1, and ran through Sept. 24. For the third year, though, for the September season, SGL 46 (the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area) was not open, to give the local resident Canada goose population a chance to increase.

Both the controlled and public areas of Middle Creek will be open for the regular goose seasons (Nov. 15-26, and Dec. 14-Jan. 21), the bag limits will remain at one daily and two in possession.

Dunn pointed out that the 2005-2006 duck seasons include a full, 60-day season for pintails, and a limited season for canvasbacks. Pintail population levels are sufficient to allow a full 60-day season for this species. However, due to population levels, seasons for canvasbacks will remain 30 days. Bag limits for both species will remain one bird daily and two in possession.

"This year saw a record low breeding population for scaup," Dunn said. "Waterfowl managers are concerned about the 22-year decline in the scaup population, and have reduced the daily bag limit from three to two, to further reduce the harvest on this species."

In addition to a regular Pennsylvania hunting license, persons 16 and older must have a Federal Migratory

Bird and Conservation Stamp, commonly referred to as a "Duck Stamp," signed in ink across its face. All hunters, regardless of age, must have a Pennsylvania Migratory Game Bird License to hunt waterfowl and other migratory birds, including doves, woodcock, coots, moorhens, rails and snipe. All migratory game bird hunters in the United States are required to complete a Harvest Information Program survey when they purchase a state migratory game bird license. The survey information is then forwarded to the USFWS.

"By answering the questions on the survey card, hunters will improve survey efficiency and the quality of information used to track the harvest of migratory birds for management purposes," Dunn said.

Hunters must use non-toxic shot while hunting ducks, geese or coots in Pennsylvania. The use of decoys powered or operated by batteries or any other source of electricity are unlawful in Pennsylvania. Also, the use of any sort of artificial substance or product as bait or an attractant is prohibited.

Hunters encouraged to report banded birds

Hunters are encouraged to call, toll-free,1-800-327-BAND to report banded ducks, geese and doves they harvest. Callers will be requested to provide information on where, when and what species of bird was taken, and the band number. Hunters also may report banded birds via the Internet by going to the U.S. Geological Survey's website (www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/), scroll down and select "How to Report a Bird Band."

By reporting bands, hunters help the Game Commission and the USFWS learn more about waterfowl movements, and survival and harvest rates, which are all critical to population management and setting of hunting regulations. Each year, nearly 380,000 ducks and geese and 30,000 mourning doves are banded across the United States and Canada.

Dunn noted that the toll-free reporting program is paying big dividends. Under the old reporting system, less than a third of the banded birds taken by hunters were reported. Now, with the toll-free system in place, band reporting rates are estimated to be 60 to 70 percent.

Hunters cautioned about eating mergansers

To minimize potential health impacts, it's suggested that hunters not eat mergansers, particularly those taken in the Lake Erie and northwestern Pennsylvania hunting zones.

Based on studies conducted in the past two decades by Pennsylvania and New York, mergansers, especially common and red-breasted, in the Lake Erie region have been found with varying levels of contaminants, including PCBs.

Mergansers consume fish and other aquatic organisms that may cause a concentration of contaminants in body tissue. Health officials have issued similar consumption advisories for certain species of fish found in these same waters.

For this reason, hunters are cautioned to not consume any mergansers. Other waterfowl should be skinned and the fat removed before cooking. Stuffing should be discarded

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News;* the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

after cooking and should not be consumed. Hunters should not eat more than two meals of waterfowl per month.

Hunters urged to take precautions against West Nile virus

When heading afield, hunters should take basic steps to prevent insect bites, thereby eliminating the possibility of contracting West Nile virus.

"West Nile virus is no reason to limit your outdoor activities," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "However, you can and should try to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes."

West Nile virus can cause encephalitis or meningitis. The virus is spread to humans, birds and other animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that is carrying the virus.

Bob Boyd, PGC Bureau of Wildlife Management assistant director, lists the following information pertaining to hunting and West Nile virus.

- Crows and blue jays are the most susceptible to the virus. There is no major risk of infection for game bird species. Game birds can contract the virus, but the virus usually clears the bloodstream in a short time. Thus the bird is no longer infectious.
- There is no evidence that humans can contract the disease by touching or field dressing a bird. As a precaution, wear rubber gloves when handling or field dressing an animal, and wash hands and tools thoroughly after field dressing.
- There is no evidence that a dog can become infected by flushing, retrieving or eating a bird.
- There is no evidence that the virus is spread through consumption of meat, or that meat is even affected. As with any wild game, always cook meat thoroughly.
- Wear long sleeves and pants and use insect repellent containing DEET while outside where mosquitoes are present.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact the state Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (toll-free); or visit www.westnile.state.pa.us.

Wear a life jacket if hunting from a boat

Waterfowlers who hunt from boats are urged to wear a properly fitted life jacket while on the water. According

PGC Executive Director Search

With Executive Director Vern Ross retiring on December 31, the Game Commission is looking for a new executive director. Applicants should have eight years of progressively responsible administrative management or staff experience, including five years of experience in directing and managing a major function within a conservation agency, and a bachelor's degree in wildlife management, biology, public administration, business administration or a closely related field, or an equivalent combination of experience and training.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer supporting workforce diversity. Interested applicants must submit a typed resume and Commonwealth Personal Data Sheet (available at http://www.hrm.state.pa.us/pds, or by calling 717-787-5801) to: John J. Riley, President, Board of Commissioners, RR1, Box 587, Scotrun, PA 18355.

For further information, call 1-717-787-5801.

to the U.S. Coast Guard, every year several hunters die from drowning and hypothermia. Part of the problem is that many waterfowlers are not necessarily experienced boaters, and when hunting, with a number of hunters, all their decoys and other equipment, and dogs, boats can easily become unbalanced, especially if the wind comes up.

When a boat does capsize, hunters are submerged in cold water, leading to loss of body heat and onset of hypothermia.

Wearing life jackets and not overloading boats, making sure the boat is properly loaded and balanced before hitting the water, will go a long ways toward preventing accidents.

Webless Migratory Bird Seasons and Daily Limits

Possession limit is twice the daily bag limit except for rails (see table).

Species	Open Season	Daily Limit
Doves[A]	Sept. 1 - Oct. 1	12
	Oct. 29 - Nov. 26	12
	Dec. 26 - Jan. 4	12
Woodcock	Oct. 15 - Nov. 12	3
Common Snipe (Wilson's)	Oct. 15 - Nov. 19	8
Rails (Sora and Virginia only)[B]	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	3[C]
Moorhens, Gallinules	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	3

[A] During the Sept. 1 to Oct. 1 portion of the dove season, shooting hours are noon to sunset. During the remainder of the season, shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

[B] No open seasons on other rails.

[C] Singly or aggregate combinations. Possession limit same as daily limit, 3.

Canada Geese

Pymatuning Zone

Nov. 5 – 26 & Dec. 12 – 29 (1 goose daily bag limit).

Atlantic Population Zone

Nov. 15 – 26 & Dec. 14 – Jan. 21 (3 goose daily limit).

Southern James Bay Canada Goose Hunting Zone

Nov. 12 – Dec. 31 (2 goose daily bag limit) &
Jan. 16 – Feb. 15 (5 goose daily bag limit).

Resident Canada Goose Zone

Nov. 15 – 26 & Dec. 9 – Feb. 15 (5 goose daily limit)

Early Resident Canada Goose Season – Statewide

September 1 – 24 (8 goose daily bag limit, 16 in possession) except:

(1) No September goose season in that portion of Crawford County south of SR 198 from the Ohio state line to intersection of SR 18, to intersection of US Route 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to Crawford/Mercer County line. NOTE: **This area is different than that described in the Pymatuning Zone for the regular season.**

(2) No September Canada goose season on SGL 46, the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Both the controlled and public areas are closed.

Atlantic Brant

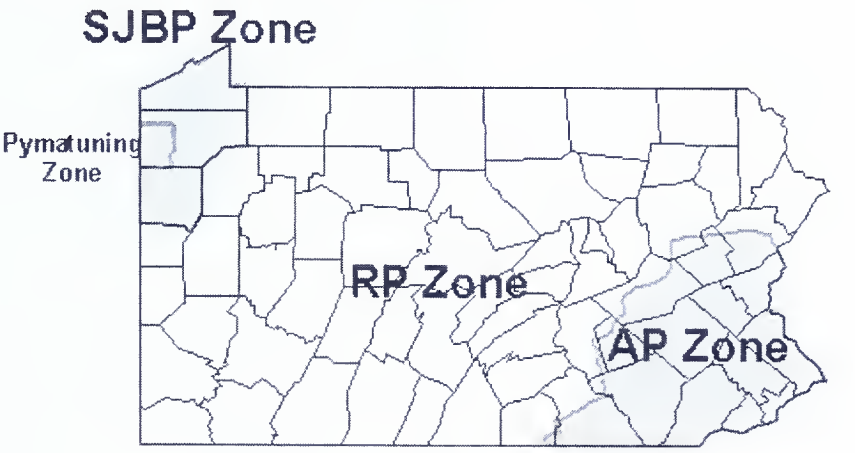
Oct. 15 – Nov. 18 (2 brant daily bag limit, 4 in possession).

Snow Geese

Nov. 7 – Mar. 10 (15 daily bag limit, no possession limit).

No Open Season: Tundra and Trumpeter Swans and Harlequin Ducks

Canada Goose Hunting Zones



Resident Canada Goose Zone (RP)

All of Pennsylvania **except** for Crawford, Erie, and Mercer counties **and** the area east of route SR 97 from Maryland state line to the intersection of SR 194, east of SR 194 to intersection of US Route 30, south of US Route 30 to SR 441, east of SR 441 to SR 743, east of SR 743 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of I-80, south of I-80 to New Jersey state line.

Southern James Bay Population Zone (SJBP)

Erie, Mercer and Crawford Counties **except** for the Pymatuning Zone (The area south of SR 198 from the Ohio state line to intersection of SR 18, SR 18 south to SR 618, SR 618 south to US Route 6, US Route 6 east to US Route 322/SR 18, US Route 322/SR 18 west to intersection of SR 3013, SR 3013 south to the Crawford/Mercer County line.)

Pymatuning Zone

The area south of SR 198 from the Ohio state line to intersection of SR 18, SR 18 south to SR 618, SR 618 south to US Route 6, US Route 6 east to US Route 322/SR 18, US Route 322/SR 18 west to intersection of SR 3013, SR 3013 south to the Crawford/Mercer County line.

Atlantic Population Zone (AP)

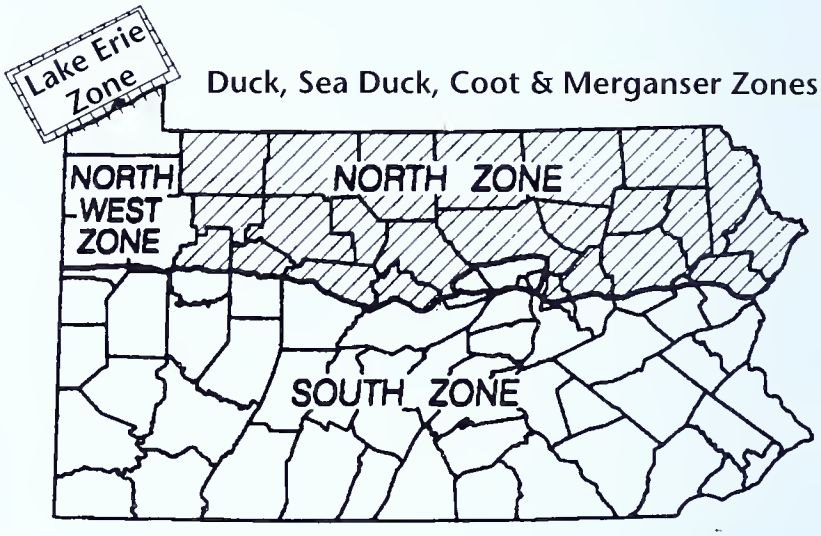
The area east of route SR 97 from Maryland state line to the intersection of SR 194, east of SR 194 to intersection of US Route 30, south of US Route 30 to SR 441, east of SR 441 to SR 743, east of SR 743 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of I-80, south of I-80 to New Jersey state line.

Seasons and Bag Limits 2005-06

Ducks, Coots, Mergansers

Bag Limits

Ducks: 6 daily, 12 in possession; daily limit may not include more than 4 mallards including 2 hen mallards, 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous tree duck, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 1 canvasback, 4 scoters and 2 scaup. Possession limit may not include more than 8 mallards including 4 hens, 2 black ducks, 2 pintails, 2 mottled ducks, 2 fulvous tree ducks, 4 wood ducks, 4 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 8 scoters and 4 scaup.



Mergansers: 5 daily; not more than 1 hooded merganser daily or 2 in possession.

Coots: 15 daily, 30 in possession.

DUCK ZONES - Ducks, sea ducks, coots, mergansers

Lake Erie Zone - Lake Erie, Presque Isle and the area within 150 yards of the Lake Erie shoreline.

Northwest Zone - The area bounded on the north by the Lake Erie Zone and including all of Erie and Crawford counties and all of Mercer and Venango counties north of I-80.

North Zone - The area east of the Northwest Zone and north of I-80 to Route 220, north from I-80 to I-180, north and east of I-180 from Route 220 to I-80, north of I-80 from I-180 to the Delaware River.

South Zone - All of state not in the Lake Erie, Northwest and North Zones.

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day (Ducks, Mergansers, Canada Geese*, Coots and Moorhens): September 24. *Canada geese my not be taken at Pymatuning or at Middle Creek, SGL 46. See Early Resident Canada Goose Season for area descriptions.

Season Dates

Lake Erie Zone

Canvasbacks – Dec. 7 – Jan. 10.

All other ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers – Oct. 31 – Nov. 26 & Nov. 30 – Jan. 10.

North Zone
Canvasbacks – Nov. 28 – Dec. 31
All other ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers – Oct. 8 – 22 &
Nov. 8 – Dec. 31.
Northwest Zone
Canvasbacks – Nov. 12 – 26 & Dec. 12 – Dec. 30
All other ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers Oct. 8 – Nov. 26 & Dec. 12 – 30.
South Zone
Canvasbacks – Nov. 21 – Dec. 24.
All other ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers – Oct. 8 – 15 &
Nov. 15 – Jan. 14.

See summary of regulations on page 48.

Major hunting seasons underway

OCTOBER kicks off with the opening of the archery deer season on Oct. 1, and following soon after are the Youth Squirrel and Pheasant seasons (Oct.8-14). October 15 marks the beginning of the early small game season, when squirrels and grouse become fair game, and the muzzleloader antlerless deer season. On October 20, the 3-day antlerless deer season opens for Junior and Senior license holders, and those with Disabled Person Permit (vehicle use) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services. The two early antlerless deer seasons run through October 22.

Rabbits and pheasants come in on October 22, and then the fall turkey season opens on October 29.

For deer, antler restrictions are the same this year as last year. Specifically, In WMUs 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 2D, to be legal an antlered deer must have at least four points to a side. In all other WMUs, three points to a side is legal. Statewide, junior license holders, disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle, and active duty U.S. Armed Services personnel may abide by the former antler restrictions of one antler of three or more inches in length or one antler with at least two points. Senior license holders must follow the new antler restrictions.

A point is defined as any antler projection (including the brow tine) at least one inch in length from base to tip. The main beam shall be counted as a point regardless of length.

An antlerless deer is defined as a deer without antlers, or a deer with antlers both less than three inches.

Fluorescent orange requirements vary. Check the 2005-06 Hunting and Trapping Digest. A concise summary of not just fluourescent orange requirements, but license and stamp requirements, too, can be found on page 80 of the Digest.

For more Game Commission information visit www.pgc.state.pa.us

Summary of Regulations

Notice: The material below is only a summary. Each hunter should also consult the actual Federal Regulations which may be found in Title 50, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 20. In addition to State regulations, the following Federal rules also apply to the taking, possession, shipping, transporting and storing of migratory game birds.

Restrictions: No person shall take migratory game birds:

- With a trap, snare, net, crossbow, rifle, pistol, revolver, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.
- With a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one piece filler which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun.
- From a sink box (a low floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).
- From or with the aid or use of a car or other motor-driven land conveyance, or any aircraft.
- From or by means of any motor boat or sail boat unless the motor has been completely shut off and/or the sail furled, and its progress therefrom has ceased.
- By the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting, and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such tame birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.
- Using records or tapes of migratory bird calls or sounds, or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls.
- By driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sailboat to put them in the range of hunters.
- By the aid of baiting (placing feed such as corn, wheat, salt or other feed to constitute a lure or enticement), or on or over any baited area. Hunters should be aware that a baited area is considered to be baited for 30 days after the removal of the bait.

For additional information on federal regulations, contact: Senior Resident Agent, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Elizabeth, NJ 07201; 1-973-645-5910.

Closed Season: No person shall take migratory game birds during the closed season.

Waterfowl hunting is not permitted on Sundays.

Shooting or Falconry Hours: No person shall take migratory game birds except during the hours open to shooting and falconry as prescribed.

Daily Bag Limit: No person shall take in any one day more than one daily bag limit.

Field Possession Limit: No person shall possess more than one daily bag limit while in the field or returning from the field to one's car, hunting camp, home, etc.

Wanton Waste: All migratory game birds killed or crippled shall be retrieved, if possible, and retained in the custody of the hunter in the field.

Tagging: No person shall give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless the birds are tagged by the hunter with the following information: the hunter's signature and address; the total number of birds involved, by species; and the dates such birds were killed. No person or business shall receive or have in custody any migratory game birds belonging to another person unless such birds are tagged.

Possession of Live Birds: Wounded birds reduced to possession shall be immediately killed and included in the daily bag limit.

Dressing: No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird (except doves) and then transport the birds from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported from the field to one's home or to a migratory bird preservation facility.

Nontoxic Shot, Shot Size: NONTOXIC SHOT must be used while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots in Pennsylvania; the possession of lead shot while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots is unlawful. Shot for waterfowl hunting may not be larger than T size.
Nontoxic shot types approved by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service are: Steel shot, steel shot with coating (1% of either copper, nickel, zinc chromat, or zinc chloride), bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-matrix and tungsten-nickel (HEVI-SHOT), **tungsten-bronze-iron shot, tungsten-tin-bismuth, and tungsten-tin-iron-nickel.**

Decoys: The use of decoys powered or operated by batteries or any other source of electricity are unlawful for use in Pennsylvania.

Baiting: The use of any sort of artificial substance or product as bait or an attractant is prohibited.

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Colorado

A resident convicted of poaching deer and furbearers must pay nearly $7,000 in fines and could be barred from hunting and fishing in Colorado, and 19 other states that participate in a special wildlife-crimes compact with Colorado, for the rest of his life.

Maryland

The Department of Natural Resources' current system of maintaining check stations in most parts of the state for deer and turkeys has been replaced by an electronic based system. This year hunters will have the option of reporting their kill by calling a toll-free phone number or registering by accessing the Internet.

Maine

The Sportsmen's Alliance of Maine was instrumental in recently defeating a bill that would have banned the manufacture, transfer and possession of assault weapons, which would have included select semi-automatic shotguns, 50-caliber rifles, including muzzleloaders, and 50-caliber ammunition. "The anti-gun lobby introduces vague weapons bans that can critically impair hunters' rights," said Tony Celebrezze, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance director of state services. "The broad language can put activities such as muzzleloader or shotgun hunting on the chopping block."

Texas

Hunting incidents in 2004 decreased to the lowest amount since records began in 1966. The number of people injured in hunting related incidents decreased from 44 in 2003 to 29 in 2004, although fatalities increased from two to four during the same period.

North Dakota

Slightly more than 13,900 cottontail rabbits were taken by about 2,950 hunters in 2004.

Michigan

Department of Natural Resources personnel are snagging hair from bears across much of the Lower Peninsula, to obtain genetic samples to be used to project bear numbers and, in turn, determine hunting quotas. The hair is snagged on barbed wire stretched about 20 inches off the ground around bait suspended above it. The baited areas are posted with signs to warn people. In 2002 and 2003, about 2,000 samples were collected.

National Wild Turkey Federation Milestones

More than $193 million Hunting Heritage Super Fund and cooperator dollars have been spent on more than 29,000 priority projects benefiting wild turkey since 1985. During the 2004 trap and transfer season, the NWTF coordinated the relocation of 5,176 birds. Since 2001, local chapters throughout America and Canada donated more than 22,000 wild turkeys to families in need of a holiday feast through the Turkey Hunters Care program.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

"In my mind's eye I could see a pair of wild yellow eyes, under moonlit fur, staring through the tent net screening."

Night of the Coyotes

"YOU KNOW what I'd like to hunt?" a friend of mine asked. "An eat-em-back."

"What?" I said. "What's an eat-em-back?" I suspected a joke.

"You know, one of those critters that if you don't get them first, they'll eat you back."

What he meant was a predator, an animal capable of killing and eating you, as a match to what your intentions are. As a hunting animal himself, my friend wanted to experience something other than going after game such as deer and rabbits, fodder for other predators. He wanted to feel the uncertain tingle of not knowing who was "top dog" out there, him or what he was hunting. He felt that would be the ultimate outdoor challenge.

Linda Steiner



I don't share his desire. I can perhaps understand that some people want to experience a hunt with an edge of fear, by going after something that could indeed "eat them back." For myself, I enjoy reading Capstick and Hemingway, but I don't really want a wounded leopard's blood dripping on my head from a tree above (Capstick). I also like reading about ill-starred attempts on Mount Everest and against-all-odds returns through the wilderness after plane crashes, with or without cannibalism. But I don't want the frostbite or the aftertaste. I enjoy these stories best when I'm wrapped in a throw in an easy chair beside the fireplace. Call me a wimp, call me cautious, but the eat-em-backs are not for me. That's not to say I haven't had encounters with them, though.

Are coyotes eat-em-backs? They have the capability and, in the case of deer, the propensity.

In the main, coyotes are shy of humans, but when it's dark and you're outnumbered and surrounded, you get a little of that "on the wrong side of predator/prey" feeling. Even when the animals are doing nothing but vocalizing and sniffing around.

This summer I had my closest and strangest coyote encounter while on a backpack camping trip in the Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania. I had seen coyotes several times previously, one that loped across I-80 in front of the car and a couple at some distance hunting in fields. Several others had crossed trails in front of me, once on a game lands and another time on a bicycle path. Until last July, though, my most memorable encounter was when two large coyotes barreled toward me during the early muzzleloader deer season. I thought at first that they were small deer, until an instant later, when they spotted me and veered off the track. They gave me great broadside views that were burned into my memory. I paced off the distance after they were gone — 15 steps.

But back to the camping trip. It was the second day on the Loyalsock Trail. We had just filtered water from a small stream, filled our water bottles and climbed to the forested plateau where we would set up our tents. I mention this because I believe part of the reason for the coyote encounter is that few backpackers camp where we did, far from a water source.

The mountain top was not as flat and conducive to tent floor sleeping as we anticipated, but we found a spot in a hemlock patch, right beside the trail, that would do for the two tents for the four of us. The day had been long and hot so dinner was hasty. At nightfall we were in our sleeping bags. We had left off the rain flies, so the cool night air would circulate through the screens, which at the tent door reached the ground.

I didn't hear the first part of the serenade. Chalk that up to how tired I was from the hard hiking, but the others told me it began shortly after full dark. The coyotes seemed to start with the rising of the near-full moon. My fellow campers said it sounded like two packs, one close containing four to six "dogs," and another farther away, maybe across the river canyon, answering the first. The close group yipped and yapped, howled and whined.

At first they sounded from the hillside we had hiked up. We wondered later if they had scented us and, curious, followed the trail to our tents. We don't know how close they got, but 20 or 30 yards was a good guess, maybe nearer. The campers in the other tent, right beside mine and my husband's, said they could hear the animals walking in the dry leaves. The coyotes would set up a ruckus, then fall silent and move away, and then return to the tents. Perhaps they couldn't figure out what smelled like people, but didn't look like them.

I awoke about one o'clock in the morning to loud, high-pitched barking. Coyotes! They were so loud they sounded like they were right beside the tent. Getting my wits about me, I pinpointed them as directly behind the other tent. I must admit that for a moment my selfish thought was, Good, the other guys are between us and them. I shook my husband awake.

"Listen," I whispered, "coyotes."

He gave a quiet chuckle.

"Did you just hear them now?" he asked. "They've been doing that for hours."

After he rolled over and went back to sleep I listened to the calls for a while, and then they stopped. I didn't know if I was glad, sad or apprehensive at that.

I've heard about the shyness and wariness of coyotes, but I was also feeling vulnerable.

"What big teeth you have," said Little Red Riding Hood.

"The better to . . . " I didn't want to think about it.

Because we had dispensed with the rain fly, only one layer of thin nylon lay between me and the predators. I remembered that when we had looked for a place to set up camp, I had suggested the trail itself as the only truly flat spot.

"No," my husband said, "I don't want to be right on the trail."

"Why not?" I'd asked. It seemed like the best choice. "No one's going to be hiking



Bob Steiner

down the path in the middle of the night."

"I wasn't thinking of people," he said.

I had visions of deer running into the unexpected roadblock, or a bear walking through the flimsy tent wall that shouldn't be there. I hadn't thought about coyotes.

A single coyote started up this time, with the lonesome howl that is an icon of the West, just beyond the tent site. His cry was answered by howls farther away. The night air had grown chilly, but that was only part of why I zipped the tent door and window flaps closed. I was beginning to appreciate that the coyote serenade was a genuinely unusual, maybe once-in-a-lifetime outdoor experience, but I didn't relish the possibility of waking up to a pair of wild eyes, under moonlit fur, staring through the net screening at me. What I didn't see was all right.

The next morning, each of my hiking buddies related his own tale of the coyote encounter of the night before. I was the brunt of the best joke, for sleeping through the height of the chorus, but I turned that around and remarked that it must have been because I was use to putting up with someone else's snoring.

I remembered an outdoor writer friend telling me about backcountry camping in winter in Canada and his lying awake at night listening to wolves close by. The next day he and his companions found out what all the howling and running and snarling had been about — the pack had brought down and eaten a moose a scant 100 yards from the tent. He recounted the story with gleaming eyes, while I shivered just imagining it.

The closest I have come to a wild wolf was when one walked by the car, close enough beside my door that I could have touched it, during a visit to Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario.

I have walked in a meadow in Yellowstone National Park, while a sow and two cub grizzlies ate and lazed about a half mile away. On that same hike, I believe my companion and I spooked off other grizzlies that had been digging roots along the trail. The sign was that fresh and the earth that loose and damp on the hot, dry day. As we passed through the area, I felt that grizzly eyes were probably still upon me.

I've seen bears many times in the Pennsylvania woods, especially when hunting (but not in bear season), and have had them pass at 10 yards. When I tell about these encounters, some people ask, "Weren't you scared? I'd be afraid to see a bear." I reply that they should hope they will see a bear some time, the animals are so shiny black and beautiful. And, no, I wasn't scared.

But I do remember feeling that edge of concern, of caution, that makes a meeting with such "could, but unlikely to, eat-me-back" wildlife different from seeing a squirrel, a deer or a turkey. Predators' capabilities give them an aura of wildness that sets them apart, and I'm cognizant, respectful and appreciative of that at every encounter. □

Where Have All The Birds Gone?

WHERE Have All The Birds Gone? ornithologist John Terborgh asked in his book back in 1989. I was reminded of his question early last October, when I noticed that the migrants were few and far between and that the woods were strangely silent.

Then the National Audubon Society released its "State of the Birds USA 2004" report. Touted as "the best data available since [Rachel Carson's] *Silent Spring* to report on their [birds'] overall health," the report did little to relieve my fear that bird numbers are diminishing. Based on national Breeding Bird Survey data from 1966 through 2003, the report primarily sums up the status of 645 bird species native to the continental U.S. that use one of four major types of natural habitat — grasslands, shrublands, forests or wetlands/water.

Until Chandler Robbins and his colleagues at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center launched the Breeding Bird Survey, there was no good data about habitat loss and its effect on birds, even though most of the loss of America's forests and wetlands occurred before 1966. Nevertheless, the report concludes, "wetland and forest species continue to suffer from the effects of poor land management." Furthermore, "poor land use decisions, certain agricultural practices and overgrazing have caused the dramatic decline of grassland and shrubland birds."



The Audubon report assigned all species to one of three categories, green, yellow or red Watchlists, based on assessments made by four research groups: Partners in Flight, Waterbirds for the Americas, the U.S. Shorebird Council and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Although habitat loss and mismanagement are the most serious threats to birds, climate change, air and water pollution, pesticides, and collisions with buildings, towers and wind turbines are also problems.

Grassland birds have suffered the greatest losses. Of 47 species, 10 are on the red Watchlist (those of highest concern), six are on the yellow (those of moderate concern), and 31, the green (those of no or low conservation concern). But even some birds on the green list are experiencing rapid declines, although their survival is not threatened at this time. For instance, both eastern meadowlarks and bobolinks are green-list birds, yet since 1966, the former has declined by 66 percent, to about 10 million birds, and the later to 11 mil-

lion, half of its 1966 population. Short-eared owls, on the yellow list, have decreased by 69 percent, to about 2.4 million. Dickcissels are also on the yellow list and Henslow's sparrows on the red. All are grassland birds that live in Pennsylvania, and dickcissels appear on our own state "Birds of Concern" list as a threatened species.

Historically, Pennsylvania was almost entirely covered in forests, but with the clearing of land for farming after the arrival of European settlers, grassland bird species moved in from the Midwest. Today our grassland birds are threatened by overgrazing, frequent haying, invasive plants and the selling of farmland for development. Ironically, some grassland birds species, such as short-eared owls and Henslow's sparrows, are finding refuge on reclaimed strip mines.

According to the Audubon report, shrubland bird species are also in steep decline. Of 107 species, 71 are green listed, 24 yellow and 12 red, giving shrubland habitat the highest proportion of yellow species. As most shrublands are in the western United States, namely sagebrush and chaparral, most of the threatened bird species are western species. However, eastern shrubland habitat is also disappearing due to forest succession, overbrowsing by deer and urbanization, and a few species on the list do live in Pennsylvania, i.e. the blue-winged warbler on the yellow list and the golden-winged warbler on the red.

Birds that need water are also in peril, both in Pennsylvania and in the United States. The Audubon list includes wetlands as well as rivers, ponds, lakes, open ocean and beaches. Of the 268 water and wetland birds, 212 are green listed, 31 yellow and 25 red. Once again, even many on the green list are of concern. The northern pintail, for instance, has declined 63 percent to 7.5 million birds.

Here in Pennsylvania the yellow-listed birds are American black ducks and American woodcock (which are not on our state Birds of Concern list), and prothonotary warblers (a candidate rare species). However, nine of our 14 birds of concern — American and least bitterns, great egrets, yellow-crowned and black-crowned night herons, king rails, common and black terns, and sedge wrens — are primarily wetland species.

Nationwide, half of our freshwater wetlands have been destroyed. In Pennsylvania the estimate is 56 percent. In his former role as the Pennsylvania Game Commission's ornithologist, Douglas A. Gross wrote in *Birds — Review of Status in Pennsylvania* back in 1998, "The loss of emergent wetlands is one of the greatest factors in the decrease in Pennsylvania's bird diversity and the cause of the decline of many of its most imperiled species."

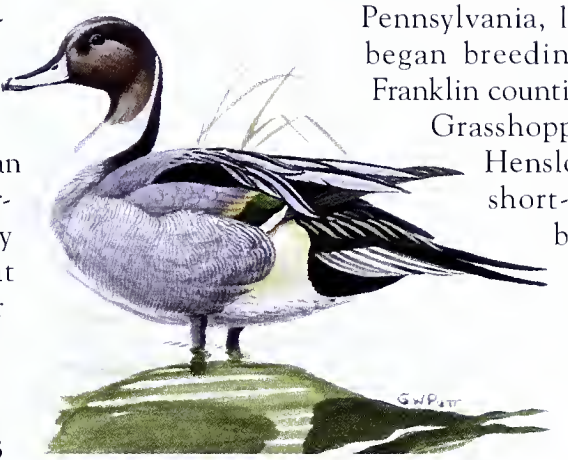
Woodland species are also declining, which brings me back to my original question, "Where have all the birds gone?" I see woodland birds in migration on our forested mountain every spring and fall, and many woodland species breed here, but both breeding and migrant bird numbers are down. The Audubon report verifies this. Of 164 woodland species, 71 are green, 24 are yellow, and 12 are red.

Once again, even a green listed species, such as the pine siskin, is in steep decline, having dropped by more than half since 1966 to 22 million birds. Wood thrushes are on the yellow list — down to 14 million, again half as many as in 1966. The cerulean warbler numbers are even worse, less than a quarter of what they were, at about 560,000. Worm-eating warblers, which also nest on our mountain, are on the yellow list, along with Kentucky, Canada, and bay-breasted warblers and red-headed woodpeckers. Still on the green list, but in declining numbers, are Louisiana waterthrushes and scarlet tanagers.

Woodlands, according to the Audubon report, are threatened by "unsustainable logging, plantation forestry, overgrazing by deer or livestock, new tree diseases, invasive species, conversion to agriculture, too-

frequent or too-scarce fire, resource extraction, urbanization, and fragmentation by roads and utility lines." Most of these threats are all too familiar to those of us concerned about conservation in Pennsylvania. Could it be that the growth of population in nearby valleys, the increase in roads and vehicles, the erection of cellphone towers, and the unsustainable logging by many forest landowners have contributed to declining breeding bird numbers here?

The Audubon report concludes with an estimate of North American bird species that have undergone the greatest population declines from 1966 to 2003. At the head of the list is the rusty blackbird, sustaining an unbelievable 97.9 percent loss, followed by Henslow's sparrow at 96.4 percent. Other birds on the list that breed in Pennsylvania are: number seven, the short-eared owl (80.3 percent), followed by the cerulean warbler (79.6 percent). The loggerhead shrike is number 10 (77.1 percent) and is also on Pennsylvania's Birds of Concern list. Number 11 is the grasshopper sparrow (also 77.1 percent), number 15 is the field sparrow (68.8 percent) and number 16, the northern bobwhite (67.6 percent).



Some of the declines are bewildering, such as that of rusty blackbirds. They have a vast breeding range throughout most of the boreal region of Canada and Alaska, so Partners in Flight scientists think that the loss of forested wetlands where rusty blackbirds spend their winters in the southeastern U.S. might be part of the problem. The cerulean warblers are most threatened by mountaintop mining in Appalachian forests, but efforts by conservation-minded citizens have so far not halted that pernicious practice.

Species that need periodic disturbances to survive include red-headed woodpeckers, prairie warblers, American woodcock, and Kentucky warblers, and scientists recommend active management to create such habitats in places where they no longer occur naturally. Northern bobwhites have almost been extirpated in Pennsylvania. They, like many grassland species, need farmland with fencerows, habitat that is difficult to find. Loggerhead shrikes also like hedgerows and occasional trees and shrubs in fields and pastures. After a 50-year absence as breeding birds in Pennsylvania, loggerhead shrikes began breeding in Adams and Franklin counties in low numbers. Grasshopper sparrows, like Henslow's sparrows and short-eared owls, have benefited from grasslands created on reclaimed strip mines in Pennsylvania.

The threats to bird species and numbers are huge, yet the National Audubon Society is confident that we "can help keep common birds common and reverse the decline of globally threatened species."

If you are a landowner, manage it for birds. We've noticed, as our forest has aged, that several mature woods' species, such as black-throated green warblers, blue-headed vireos, Acadian flycatchers and winter wrens have started to breed here, and every year their numbers increase. Our forest also provides a haven for cerulean warblers, wood thrushes, worm-eating warblers, scarlet tanagers and Louisiana waterthrushes. Due to natural periodic disturbances and our maintenance of 40 acres of meadows, we have enough early habitat to satisfy such species as eastern towhees, field and song sparrows and golden-winged warblers.

Homeowners should make their yards

havens for birds, the Audubon report suggests, "by creating a pesticide-free habitat of native plants, providing supplemental food and water, and putting out birdhouses . . . "

They also recommend that folks keep their cats indoors, buy shade-grown coffee, because it creates important winter habitat for migratory songbirds, and participate in citizen-science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, National Migratory Bird Count and Project FeederWatch, to increase our knowledge of bird populations. We should also support the purchase of public lands and defend those we already have from bad land management practices. In other words, the more game lands, state and national forests and other wild lands we have, the better for the birds.

Finally, three species appear on the Audubon list with a "0," meaning no birds sighted. These are the Eskimo curlew, Bachman's warbler and ivory-billed woodpecker. Last April, as my husband and I sat in a cabin at Raccoon Creek State Park eating breakfast, we heard on our radio the most exciting news for birders in decades — at least one ivory-billed woodpecker still lives in a most unexpected place — the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Arkansas. And it was discovered not by a scientist, but by a kayaker — Gene Sparling — who had posted his finding on his website.

Tim Gallagher, editor-in-chief of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's *Living Bird*, saw the posting while researching a book he was writing on ivory-billed sightings over the years.

On February 27, 2004, Gallagher, veteran birder Bobby Harrison, and Sparling headed into the Cache River NWR, part of a vast, 500,000 acre bottomland forest of old growth and younger trees that also includes the White River National Wildlife Refuge.

Paddling canoes into the area under Sparling's leadership, Gallagher suddenly spotted a large black and white bird that flew across in front of them at close range and in good light, a mere 68 feet away. There was no doubt that it was an ivory-billed woodpecker.

Such a discovery is a "spectacular ray of hope," Cornell lab's director John Fitzpatrick said. Since then there have been six more sightings of a male ivory-billed in that area and the hope is that at least a small breeding population of ivory-bills lives in the depths of what is still an almost impenetrable wilderness — wilderness owned mostly by the national government and by private landowners who have kept it wild.

Surely such a fantastic discovery should embolden all of us to re-examine our own priorities and try to do as much as we can to ensure that, in another 40 years, bird numbers will have returned to at least 1966 levels.

"My dream is that my great, great-grandchildren will be able to see a place like the virgin cypress forests we once cut down — and with the ivory-billed flying through it," Gallagher said.

My dream is that the United States will be such an incredible haven for large populations of woodland, shrubland, grassland and wetland birds, that we will no longer need Audubon reports when my great, great-grandchildren are alive. □

HELPING LANDOWNERS DO SOMETHING WILD

A new team of Game Commission biologists is helping Pennsylvania landowners make their properties more attractive for wildlife species of concern. Since being hired in 2004, these biologists have already helped more than 200 landowners develop habitat management plans for more than 33,000 acres. This initiative was made possible with grant monies from the federal State Wildlife Grants Program and Landowner Incentive Program, both administered by the USFWS.

A lot of camo patterns are out there, and they're not all created equal. There is much more to consider than just pattern. What's right for your application?

Can You See Me Now?

IF PENNSYLVANIA had an official state color, it just might be camouflage. Although for many hunters camouflage is the personal color of choice, for certain segments of the hunting population, camouflage is not a fashion statement. Due to the close-range nature of bowhunting, camouflage is not a luxury but just about a necessity. However, not all camouflage is created equal, and there is much more to consider than just pattern.

Camouflage is defined as, "to disguise, to conceal or to hide." I would like to expand that definition to include "to blend in." Primarily a bowhunter, I tend to focus on "blending in." In essence, I think in terms of not simply getting close (20 yards or less) to a deer, but getting close to a deer in its home range. By my way of thinking, a deer spends its entire life, 24 hours a day, seven days week, in its home territory. It sees all the seasons and all the associated changes. It knows every rock and tree and will quickly spot anything out of place. When I enter a deer's home, I make every attempt to not give any clues as to my presence, which means blending in.

The first consideration that comes to mind with camouflage is color, although, as previously mentioned, color is not the only consideration. When it comes to color the bowhunter needs only to consider the colors present during the fall bow season. During this time colors vary from greens, browns, blacks, yellows, oranges and reds in the early season to browns, blacks and some greens during the late season. The browns and blacks are dried vegetation, wood and shadows. For the most part, hunters can ignore the brilliant fall colors, as normal bowhunting set-ups are ground blinds or treestands, both of which are more closely associated with the browns, blacks and shades of green. This also means that some camo patterns are not suitable for the Pennsylvania bow season, because they were intended for specific applications. The popular Desert Tan, presently being used in the Middle East is not likely to be of much value to an archery deer hunter.

Most of today's popular camouflage patterns mirror quite nicely our fall colors, so choosing the right color is not a problem. The only additional color that the dedicated bowhunter might consider is snow camo, which is a blend of white, blacks and browns. This camo pattern is suited for the late bow season if there's snow. Snow camo is available from several manufacturers in a long, parka style lightweight outer garment. This allows hunters to use their regular clothing, and by simply adding the Snow camo outer garment they can match the existing conditions.

Another specialty camo pattern well suited for treestand hunting during late

October and November is Skyline Camo. This time period is often the most challenging for the bowhunter, because of the lack of foliage. Skyline Camo is a mixture of browns, black, gray and white and is intended for use where an elevated hunter is skylined. While a hunter wearing dark camo clothing will appear as a blob against a light sky, the Skyline Camo is designed to break up a hunter's shape with its specifically selected colors, which brings us to the next and what I consider the most important aspect of camouflage, breaking up the human shape.

Although most hunters know to control human scent, many aren't concerned about the human shape. Years ago one of the most popular camo patterns simulated tree bark. It seemed like a good idea, but when viewed from a distance, the small camo pattern appeared as a blob of dark color, actually drawing attention to the shape of the hunter. Modern camo patterns today not only use a better mixture of color, but the size of their patterns are much larger and often printed with new, high definition techniques that emphasize the differences in the shapes and colors within the camo pattern. The purpose of this design is to prevent the camo from appearing as a blob at longer distances. This also helps the camo break up the human shape, but under less than ideal conditions, the shape can still be obvious to a deer.

Several years ago we entered the second phase of camouflage effectiveness, with the addition of what is often referred to as 3D camo. While modern camo patterns are great at breaking up the hunter's image they do little to break up his outline. 3D camo breaks up the human outline by using a loose fitting outer mesh garment onto which a camouflage layer of leaf shaped material is attached. The 3D leaves create additional shadows while breaking up the reflective light patterns, making the camo more effective. In addition, the loose cut outer layer adds natural motion to produce ultimate concealment. The suit is designed



SKYLINE CAMO is a mixture of browns, black, gray and white and is intended for use where an elevated hunter is skylined.

to be worn as an outer garment and is available in all the popular camo patterns, providing maximum concealment in every terrain or season.

Actually, the hardest thing about 3D camo is getting used to the fact that it moves. I remember the first time I had it on and a slight breeze came across my shoulder as I sat motionless in my treestand. Suddenly, I caught movement on my shoulder and about jumped out of my skin until I realized it was my jacket. In a way this goes against what every hunter tries to do — remain motionless. That is until you think about it. As one of the manufacturers of this camo gear said, "The only thing in nature that does not move is a rock. Everything else moves to some degree, depending upon the air currents. Although it might take a high wind to move a big oak tree, a slight breeze will cause the grass and leaves to move. Movement itself does not alarm wildlife if the shape of the object and the color blend in with the surroundings. As a matter of fact, an object that does not move can actually draw an animal's attention. The slight movement produced by 3D camo and the fact that its irregular shape tends to break up a hunter's

human form goes a long way in making the hunter disappear."

Although the 3D camo over garment is good, there are some new products that allow you to add the 3D feature to your existing favorite camo pattern. Quality Archery Designs (www.qadinc.com) offers a couple of unique 3D add-on camo products known as SneakyLeaf and SneakyVine. SneakyLeaf consist of pairs of 3-dimensional leaves that are available in colors that cover all seasons. These leaves can be pinned to your existing camo clothing, producing the most realistic customized 3D camo available. These leaves are not only durable, but can remain attached to your clothing even while being washed. The SneakyLeaf leaves can be added to treestands and blinds when combined with the SneakyVine. The vine is a flexible coated wire that can be wrapped around the object to be disguised and to which SneakyLeaf leaves can be added. Remember, the idea behind 3D add-on camo is to break up outlines, allowing you and your equipment to blend into the surroundings.

For the truly dedicated bowhunter — or as some might say, the real nuts — there is the "Shaggie Suit," often known as the Ghillie Suit. If you aren't familiar with either of these terms, these are the suits popularized by military snipers. They are an outer garment, complete with facemask and hat or hood that have a mesh base onto which is sewn various lengths of different colored burlap or a combination of strips of a lighter weight camo material.

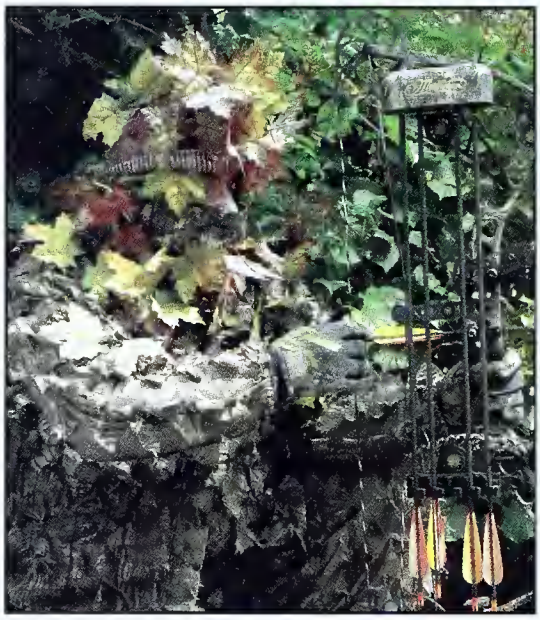
Several years ago I patterned a buck that constantly moved through a large section of waist-high grass dotted with small scrubby brush that wouldn't accommodate a treestand. The only way to hunt this buck was from the ground, and with limited cover. I knew that the sudden addition of a ground blind would immediately draw his attention, and figured I had run out of options. The season was drawing to a close and I had to do something quick, even if it was a mistake. Out of desperation I decided to try one of those "sniper suits."

I must admit that I felt a little foolish as I donned the suit and backed into a small bush. I used a small stool to ease the long hours spent pretending to be a bush. After two evenings all of my doubts of the suit's effectiveness disappeared as three does approached my ambush site. Two of the does glanced in my direction but never hesitated or gave the slightest hint of recognition. As the does moved off I spotted the buck coming. I drew when his vision was blocked by some vegetation and took the 18-yard shot when he stepped into an opening. Was it just dumb luck or did that Ghillie Suit really make a difference? All I can say is that I still have mine, and my wife has added one to her side of our hunting closet.

When it comes to bowhunting equipment it's difficult to buy anything that is not camouflaged, so for the most part you don't have to worry about color, but don't forget about shape, especially when it comes to treestands, ladderstands and blinds. Think about how easy it is to spot a treestand or ladderstand as you walk through the woods. Even though they are camouflaged, their outline sticks out like a sore thumb. Not only are they easy to spot for a deer, but they are also easily located by the few thieves that, unfortunately, we share the woods with. The addition of branches, leaves, real or man-made, help to break up these harsh outlines and can make a big difference.

When it comes to adding camo to your treestand there are some full size simulated branches with leaves on the market that can be added to the front and sides of your stand to help break your outline and add cover during the final two weeks of the season when the natural cover is gone.

Rounding out your camo outfit should be a set of gloves and a facemask or head net. The flash of hands and face can often act like a beacon when hit with the slightest amount of light. A simple pair of gloves takes care of the hand concern, but the face needs a little more care. While head nets



THE GHILLIE SUIT'S irregular shape tends to break up a hunter's human form.

and facemasks do an excellent job of covering the face, they can also be a real source of trouble. In spite of my hunting experience, last year I wore a loose fitting facemask on the evening that the buck I had been looking for all season finally appeared. As I drew the bow to my anchor point and looked through my string peep I couldn't see a thing. Moving my head to the side of the string, I realized my facemask had shifted during the draw and was covering my eyes. I eased the bow forward just in time to see the buck slip into the brush. A tight fitting facemask, such as those made by Spando-Fladge, is my first choice, followed by camo face paint. Both of these choices eliminate vision problems and won't interfere with the bowstring when anchoring. If you decide to use a loose fitting mask or head net, make sure it can be tied in place so it cannot shift during the shot. I know I will from now on.

The proper camouflage is as important as any other piece of bowhunting gear. But just like the rest of that gear, it must be suited to the purpose at hand. Match your camo color to the existing conditions, use large, high definition patterns and, above all, make sure your camo is 3D. Breaking up your outline is just as important as the color or the pattern you select. Do it right and the next time you head afield you can ask, "Can you see me now?" □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

Mammal Mania

Match the mammal with the correct description and then place the letters in the space below to finish the statement.

____	paddle-shaped tail	Y	Rabbit
____	spiny on most of its body	E	Raccoon
____	spotted coat, short tail	R	Otter
____	weasel-like with webbed feet	P	Bobcat
____	black-masked	O	Beaver
____	popular small game animal	S	Porcupine

Another name for "fish hawk" is _____

answers on p. 62

The attitude of the day is that fast is better. But is that true with shotgun loads?

Speed Kills — Or Does It?

THE TOPIC OF BULLET or pellet velocity drives me crazy. We've been in an arms race since the dawn of man it seems. Now we have 1,000-yard rifle competitions, artillery pieces that fire at targets 20 miles away and missiles that are effective from thousands of miles away. We also have shotshells sending shot swarms out at 1,500 feet per second (Wolf Performance Ammunition), with many manufacturers providing speedy loads racing along at up to 1,400 fps.

Think we don't like speed? Try paying attention to automobile advertisements. One vehicle manufacturer is taking their 10-cylinder, 500-horsepower engine from their off-the-charts sports (four-wheeled rocket) car and plunking it into a pickup truck. If Joe Average has $50,000 he can drive that truck every day.

John McGonigle



As a society, we must learn that "new," "bigger" or "faster" does not necessarily mean better. As for shooting, sometimes increased velocity is better and sometimes it's not, and sometimes it doesn't matter one way or the other.

Except for lack of practice, recoil is the major negative factor in wingshooting, which for our discussion will include both clay and feathered targets. Being an accomplished athlete in my younger years, I was well acquainted with the importance of practice. When I started hunting, it just made sense to practice shooting by breaking clay targets during the off-season. My second season of pheasant hunting, after shooting clays all summer and fall, showed conclusively that practice at clay targets was extremely valuable.

Over the years I've hunted with and known hunters who hunt hard, but miss birds often. I also know that those hunters never touched their shotguns from one season to the next. There is a direct correlation between shooting practice and full game bags.

Recoil generally, but not always, increases as velocity increases. Recoil is another reason for poor shooting. I don't care

YOU certainly don't want to dampen a youngster's desire for shooting by subjecting him or her to the excess recoil generated by hot loads.

how often one says, "I don't notice recoil when I'm hunting," I don't buy it. Perhaps their conscious allows recoil to go unnoticed, but their subconscious certainly does not; it doesn't take much of a flinch to miss a fast-flying bird.

For years the standard 12-gauge target load was three drams pushing 1 1/8-ounces of shot at about 1,145 fps, which generated nearly 20 foot-pounds of recoil in an 8-pound gun. Increase velocity to 1,300 fps and recoil jumps to 25 foot-pounds of energy. That's a significant jump and will definitely affect your shooting over time.



CLAYS SHOOTERS can increase velocity and not increase recoil if they shoot lighter loads with less shot. These loads are really catching on now with sporting clays shooters. Remington offers their STS Light Target shotshells for claybird shooters who favor lighter loads.

One way to beat the increased recoil of higher velocity is to drop to just one ounce of shot, which at the same 1,300 fps velocity decreases recoil to 20 foot-pounds, a much more manageable number, one less likely to cause flinching. It's important to realize, though, that for some types of hunting, more than an ounce of shot is desirable.

Early on, when shooting for field trials, I decided that if the standard 3¼-dram, pushing 1¼ ounces of number six shot was good, then 3¾-dram 1¼-ounce of shot loads must be a lot better, especially for long shots. Not! The recoil was atrocious; kicked like a mule. I quickly returned to the milder, yet effective, 3¼-dram 1¼-ounce loads with great results.

That heavy pheasant load at 1,330 fps, many call it a high brass load, kicks too hard to use regularly, and the pellets lose velocity quickly, providing very little boost in actual energy or "killing" power.

Consider that number 7½ shot fired at 1,200 fps slows to 726 fps and each pellet has 1.47 foot-pounds of energy at 30 yards, and at 40 yards slows to 632 fps and has 1.12 foot pounds of energy per pellet. Boosting the velocity by nearly 100 fps, the 30-yard velocity is just 758 fps with pellet energy of 1.61 foot pounds per pellet, and at 40 yards slows to 656 fps and drops to 1.21 foot pounds of energy per pellet. The energy gain at 30 and 40 yards is just 9.5 percent and 8 percent.

To get a substantial energy reward, one must increase velocity greatly. At 1,330 fps the number 6 shot pheasant load gained little energy per pellet. Increased to 1,400 fps, though, pellet energy increases 21.5 percent at 30 yards and 18.8 percent at 40 yards. Of course, now the recoil has moved from the uncomfortable range into the "that hurts" range, and it's also overkill for pheasants.

Pellets are round and do not make good projectiles. They lose velocity far faster than a pointed bullet. In fact, the faster a round pellet goes the quicker it slows down. At just 20 yards a number eight pellet loses about one third of its velocity.

To make things even worse, pellets are not truly round. They are close but misshaped, which diminishes their ballistic properties even more than if they were genuinely round. Additionally, all pellets are not uniform in size — ouch, that makes things even worse, because different pellet

Fun Game answer:

OSPREY

sizes have different ballistic qualities.

Pellets get deformed when pushed forward by the powder charge and wad and by exiting the shotgun barrel — more ballistic loss.

For claybirds, shooters can increase velocity and not increase recoil if they shoot lighter shot loads. These loads are really catching on with sporting clays shooters. Fact is that Olympic trap and skeet shooters have been using fast, light loads for years, and scores actually improved. Lower recoil increases scores.



Bob D'Angelo

PHEASANTS are tough customers and in many situations require a heavy dose of shot from a maximum load, but grouse, woodcock and doves can be taken quite nicely with lighter loads that are easier on the shoulder.

I changed years ago to one-ounce loads for trap, skeet and sporting clays and, yes, my scores improved, too. A friend went the extra mile and dropped to 7/8-ounce 12-gauge loads, just like Olympic (or international) trap and skeet shooters, and he does fine.

As mentioned previously, for game I do not like to see shot loads reduced below their historic levels. For grouse, quail and woodcock, though, a ¾-ounce load in my 28-gauge is quite effective if I do my part. I still prefer a 12-gauge for pheasants, though.

I have not yet mentioned lead, or apparent lead. "I don't have to lead as much with these fast loads" many shooters say, or, "Leads appear shorter with these fast loads." Lead is difficult to accurately get a handle on, and apparent lead is tougher yet to explain. If you think you shoot a given shotshell better, and your scores show it, stick with it unless recoil becomes a problem.

Good shooters shoot well no matter what load they shoot. Look at trap scores from years ago and one can see that shooters shot darned effectively with what we consider modest loads. Fact is that at the range most shotgunning is done, these new, small velocity gains do not matter much from a practical viewpoint. Don't miss targets due to recoil, and enjoy your wingshooting. And remember to practice. □

Cover Painting by Ken Hunter

IT'S THAT SAME OLD STORY — "You should have been here yesterday." Ain't it the way it goes, though. You spent five mornings and evenings on stand, and then this buck shows up on the sixth morning, when you decided to sleep in. All's not lost, though, as there's plenty of season left and maybe you'll cross paths with this bruiser again. Mostly due to the antler restrictions in effect since 2002, more bucks like this deer are showing up on meat poles throughout the state. In fact, antler restriction regulations are allowing about 50 percent of yearling bucks to survive their first year as antlered deer. Do your homework and put in the time, and a buck like this one just might pass near your treestand. Oh, yeah, make sure you're in it!

CROSSINGS

Frontiers and Pheasants



NEARLY 50 years ago now, my dad, my uncles and a neighbor or two returned home from a hunt. Their cheeks were ruddy, rain streaked, and their brown canvas clothes and the dogs smelled of musty crabapple thickets and frosted corn. Where we lived you could hunt both mountains and farms in a half-day's tramp, and that's what they'd done. With the dogs panting and admiring, they helped one another pull a mixed bag of grouse and pheasants from thorn-worn game bags at the backs of their coats.

They piled the birds on the concrete floor of Dad's new garage they'd all built together. I helped pen and feed the setters, then the hunters retired to the kitchen, where my mother served hot coffee and pie. I remember them there, relaxed and jovial, reliving points and shots, razzing one or another for missing, complementing long hits on birds that might have escaped. Their manner communicated that they had just participated in the most natural thing in the world, and that it would always continue thus, so that a man might always walk out back with a dog and a gun, turn whichever way he wanted, and hunt undeterred.

As they ate and laughed, I slipped out to the garage and hunkered on the cold concrete next to the pheasants and grouse. I can remember feeling stunned, paralyzed somehow, by their beauty and perfection. The pheasants seemed brassy and defiant, even in death. Their heads looked blue or green, depending upon which way you turned them to the light, but the red eye patch and white ring were immutable. The grouse were more somber, understated, but no less perfect. The browns, blacks, copper and white blended into patterns that hinted of deep places among the ferns and along the ledges.

Before the hunters had finished their coffee, I did something irrational that I could not have understood. I reached into the pockets of their hanging coats and hid their knives. I don't know how long I imagined I could forestall the inevitable, but I did not want them to clean the birds. I did not want them to disturb the perfection, mar the wildness that lay, chilling, on the concrete.

Of course, they discovered my ruse and thought it odd, as they should have. They came from an earlier time, when the utility of, and participation in, nature was unquestioned. Even my earliest years were different from theirs. I had watched some 1950s TV, grainy black-and-white romances of the lives of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, fabled frontiersmen for a generation that had missed the movement West. I didn't know it then, but we were crossing a frontier of sorts of our own, from the assumed endless utility of one generation's view of the outdoors, toward the new sentimentality of another's.

Now, I sense that reconciling those two views is the premier outdoor challenge of our time, to balance participation and use with respect and reverence. Hiding the knives was silly, but assuming that nature would always be as easily at hand as it was for my elders was naïve. We need a bit of both views now as we head into a time when few people partake personally of the natural world. We need to hunt and fish without apology, as always, but we need to remember that each element of wildness is a precious, irreplaceable piece of a limited whole.

Ben Moyer

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

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editorial

C W D

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) was found in New York this past spring and then in West Virginia this past September. To keep this deadly disease of white-tailed deer and elk and other members of the deer family from being brought into Pennsylvania, and to improve our chances of catching it early should it be found here, heightened regulations are being enacted that affect hunters and commercial deer and elk propagators.

For hunters, the state has ordered an immediate ban on the importation of specific carcass parts from states and Canadian provinces where CWD has been found in free ranging deer and elk populations. There are, though, two exceptions: First, for West Virginia, parts are banned only from deer taken in Hampshire County; second, there are no import restrictions for deer from New York, because New York has restrictions in place that will prohibit all hunters from taking deer parts out of its containment area.

What carcass parts? The specific body parts include: head (including brain, tonsils, eyes); spinal cord/backbone; spleen; skull plate with attached antlers, if visible brain or spinal cord material is present; cape, if visible brain or spinal cord material is present; any object or article containing visible brain or spinal cord material; and brain-tanned hide. Hunters are permitted to bring in meat as long as no part of the backbone is included. For a more inclusive list, check the websites below.

At press time, included in the interstate/international quarantine order are Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming, and Alberta and Saskatchewan. So, hunters going to any of those states or provinces — where CWD has been found in the wild — may not return to Pennsylvania with any of the specified body parts.

The roughly 900 commercial propagators in the business of raising and selling deer, elk and other cervids, in Pennsylvania are, as of October 1, required to have tested any deer or other cervid that dies. Prior to this recent regulation, such testing was voluntary.

Over the past four years, the Game Commission has had nearly every hunter-killed elk (162) tested and, for the past three years, 6,259 hunter-killed deer tested, and none of the animals were found to be carrying CWD. This year, the PGC plans to test all hunter-killed elk and at least 4,000 hunter-killed deer for the disease.

While CWD can be devastating to deer and other cervids, there are no scientific indications whatsoever that CWD poses any sort of health threat to humans. The consumption of meat from infected animals poses no known threat, nor does even handling an infected animal.

As hunters, we need to be vigilant and careful, too. Anyone who sees Pennsylvania deer or elk behaving oddly, that appear to be sick, or that are dying for unknown reasons is urged to contact the nearest Game Commission region office. Individuals should not kill the animal. When field-dressing, hunters are advised to use disposable gloves, and to not cut across or through the spinal cord or skull.

To stay abreast of this ongoing situation, visit the Game Commission's and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's websites, www.pgc.state.pa.us and www.agriculture.state.pa.us. Another good website is www.cwd-info.org. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I am on active duty in Afghanistan, and one of your readers sent some *Game News* magazines to us. I wanted to write and say thanks and tell you that you have a nice magazine, much nicer than my home state's, and it has me looking forward to hunting season — will have to wait until '06, though.

M. B. Holmes, LTDC, OD
CFC-A

Editor:

"The Question," by Mark Foltz and "Fishing for Deer," by Linda Steiner, in your August issue, rank among the best things I've ever read.

At age 74, though, I've stopped asking myself why I hunt, and now ask myself if I still can. When I release a 12-pound steelhead or stand over an 8-point buck, though, I feel just like a kid again.

R. Walthius
Lakewood, OH

Editor:

I started reading *Game News* years before I started hunting, and I couldn't wait until I could go hunting and have stories of my own to share with my grandfather and father. I've been hunting for two years now, and I took my first deer last year.

C. Trego
Pottstown

Editor:

I give *Game News* gift subscriptions to: my host who has let me hunt deer on his property for 45 years; my neighbor, in honor of her high school graduation; my minister, to read and then put in the church library; my long-time deer hunting buddy; the young man who drives me to and from deer camp every year; and our high school library. *Game News* gift subscriptions are not only a way to thank people, but also a way to promote the magazine, and the Game Commission.

C. Mills
Huntingdon Valley

Editor:

I'm a Pennsylvania native and have seldom missed a Pennsylvania deer season. I want to thank Vern Ross for the improvements made to Pennsylvania deer hunting since 1999, and I'm sad to see he's departing. This year, when I travel to Pennsylvania for the rifle season opener, I know my brother and I will have our best chances ever of harvesting a *mature* Pennsylvania whitetail.

D. Feist
Knoxville, TN

Editor:

Although not a hunter, I've been an avid *Game News* reader for 20 years. Marcia Bonta's "A Natural Heritage" and Chuck Fergus's "Sprawl," in the September issue, were particularly moving.

My family has taken ownership of what was my grandfather's cabin in Clearfield County, where there are now plans to build a power plant a few miles away. All of the related construction and ongoing operation of the plant is certain to adversely affect the wildlife for hunters and nonhunters alike.

S. Markey
Willoughby, OH

Editor:

When I was required to give my Social Security Number to purchase my hunting license, I had second thoughts about buying it. My concern is identity theft. How about just the last four digits?

J. Kalchthaler
Cheswick

Requiring hunting license buyers to provide their Social Security numbers is a federal law that the Game Commission and hunters and trappers have no choice but to abide by.

Editor:

While I was unable to obtain an antlerless deer license for WMU 2F, I was glad to see the doe licenses cut and would like to see them cut even further for a couple years. I remember when there were too many deer and that there was a distinct browse line throughout the woods. Now, there aren't as many deer but the woods are thick with brush.

L. Frost
Springfield, VA

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



Luck Strikes Thrice

I WAS IN A HURRY. It was the Saturday before bear season and I needed some reloads and to shoot my rifle. I found Allen, Ted and their father Paul in their barn, so I helped them finish their chores. I love to wear my hunting coat in the barn, because there is no scent that's better to cover up human odor in an agricultural area.

We walked out of the barn, only to witness a buck chase a doe around the hillside opposite the farm. I had hunted there for turkeys the week before, took a 15-pound jake, and had seen five bucks in all.

Allen and I drove through small woodlots and pastures to his house on top of the hill. There we met Jim, a fellow schoolteacher, and reloaded cartridges, 140-grain Ballistic Tip bullets on the business end of 7mm Rem. Mag. cases. When we had enough, we took the gun out to try them. I had missed the last three woodchucks I had shot at that summer, and thought it was me and not the rifle. I was right, the rifle shot perfectly.

A look at my watch told me it was time to leave for home and get to my son's football game. I jokingly told Allen and Jim that I'd bring my bear up Monday to show them. Allen told me he would buy a bear license, but the chance of seeing a bear was slim. I said the chance was even slimmer if he didn't go at all and left saying, "Anyway, I feel lucky."

The next morning my younger brother, Greg, called. He wanted to know where I had decided to hunt. Health problems the past few months had taken much of my stamina. In prior years I would drive to the mountain behind my place and hunt the 10 miles back to my house. It is big woods and steep. Such a hunt this year, though, was out of the question.

I had done my homework, though, and had seen three bears within a half mile of Greg's house, which was on the edge of my parents' farm. I visited all the surrounding neighbors and received permission to hunt on their land. All were happy to have me. Eight different bears had been sighted in the immediate area. I had seen two in a pasture on one of the farms two weeks earlier, and when I pulled out of one farmer's drive, I saw a huge bear on the opposite hillside.

Greg said to meet him at his barn at 6 a.m. and that he would hunt with me. I think he really wanted to keep an eye on me because of my health. We don't hunt together as much as I would like, so this was a treat for me. He mentioned that our cousins had seen four bears the week before in the woods above the barn.

I met Greg Monday morning and drove to the top of the hill and parked in the landowner's field. We had permission to hunt the three wooded draws south of where we were parked. We would hunt at our own pace. When it was light enough to hunt, we moved out. In the first draw, Greg said

By Stan Strong

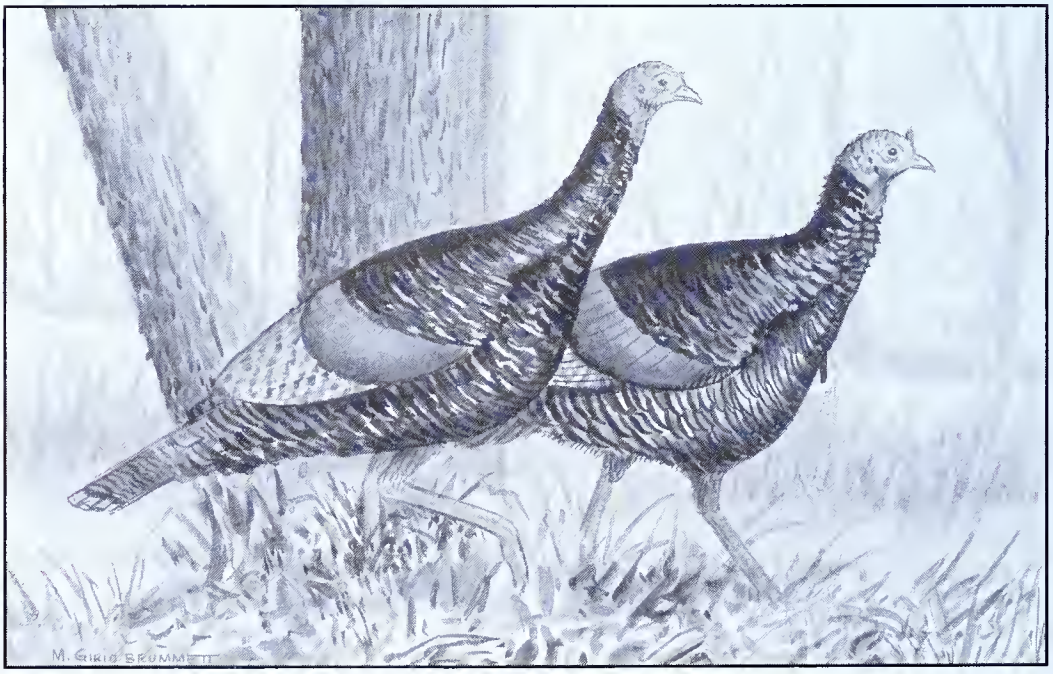
he'd sit at one end and that I should sit at the other. He would spend about two hours there, then work down the draw to the power line where I would be sitting. My parting words were, "I feel lucky."

Two hours passed, and the only thing I saw was a nice buck. Then a doe ran through, and not far behind came Greg. He was excited. It seems two hawks had flown into a nearby tree and began fighting. Then he heard a plop and saw a rabbit land at his feet. It was dead and still warm.

From there we decided to walk the top ridge of the hill just to the east of us. It was level on one side and had a big bench on the other. The terrain below the bench was steep all the way to the valley below. I worked out along the bench, and every 50 yards walked to the edge to look over the side into the valley below. I noticed a hunter and circled around him. I had just looked over the edge and walked back to an old tram road when I noticed a black object below a large fallen pine tree. After studying the object, the face of a bear materialized, and when I found it in my scope, I spotted three other bears in single file staring back at me. I picked the largest one and placed the crosshairs on its chest. I moved the crosshairs ahead to its shoulder and squeezed the trigger. At the report of the gun, the bear vanished. The other bears stood looking at me as I chambered another round and scoped another bear. They all looked big. Not knowing where the bear I had shot at was, I certainly didn't consider taking another shot. The bears looked behind them, and when I swung the scope that way, all I could see was leaves and debris flying in the air.

I yelled to Greg and told him three bears were heading his way, then ran to the spot where the bear I had shot at stood. I searched for the bear, but it spotted me first and stood up. I realized we were only 10 feet apart. My next shot anchored the bear before it could disappear into the thick cover below the bench.

A shot then rang out in front of me, and after a second report, I waited a few minutes, taking time to admire my bear and tag it. I knew it was more than 200 pounds. Again I yelled to Greg. He answered from where the shots had come from. I yelled



that I had one, and he yelled back that he did, too. I told him to meet me at the bottom of the steep bank. I rolled the bear to the edge and rolled it over. It rolled and slid halfway down to a fence. I crawled down, dislodged it from a tree, gave it another push, and it rolled to a pasture fence.

We located the landowner and he hauled out the bears and two happy hunters. I remembered saying to my brother that this whole ordeal was unbelievable. He agreed.

We headed for the Trout Run check station, to have the bears checked and weighed. We then took the bears to a meat market to be skinned. We usually process deer ourselves, but decided to have the bear meat smoked.

A week later, for the deer season opener, my son, Gabe, and I were eating breakfast at my friend Allen's house. Then, before dawn, we walked to our spots and began our wait. I noticed Gabe's stand was too far down the slope, that we were covering much of the same area, so I moved. Soon after, I heard Gabe shoot. I sat until noon and then wandered back to Allen's house, where Gabe was displaying a fine 7-point. I saw 12 deer that day, but none with antlers, and then I hunted every afternoon after school and saw 88 deer, but still no bucks.

I hunted with Gabe behind our house on the first day of the antlerless season. We had been seeing 15 does every night in the field in front of our house. I thought it would be easy hunting, but by noon we hadn't seen a deer.

We drove to my parents' farm and put on drives with them. On the first drive I saw four does, but for safety reasons couldn't get a shot. I did miss a lone doe that ran through a patch of pines above my stand, then a volley of shots told me that Gabe and my brother Greg's son had seen some deer. They each took a fine doe.

Not long into the drive a doe headed my way. The deer dropped about 300 yards from where I shot my bear.

We hunted the rest of the day, but I saw nothing. I was very tired and ached all over. I thought we were done for the day, but Greg said he would put on one more drive on the other side of the farm if I felt up to it. I agreed. Not long into the drive a doe headed my way. It was about 150 yards up a hill. I placed the crosshairs on its chest. When the rifle went off, the deer went down. I was only about 300 yards from where I had shot my bear.

It was a fantastic hunting season, and from now on, when I say, "I feel lucky," I'll have a lot more hunting companions. □

Cover Photo by Hal Korber

THEY'RE BIG, colorful, and make a fine addition to a hunter's game bag. They're not common throughout the state, but they can be plentiful in the areas they do inhabit, particularly extreme western Pennsylvania from Erie County south to Greene County. If you enjoy squirrel hunting, you owe it to yourself to venture into fox squirrel country to hunt the large bushytails. Squirrel hunting (small game hunting in general) is not as popular in Pennsylvania as it once was, with fewer than 200,000 hunters, according to 2003 statistics, bagging slightly more than a million bushytails. That's a shame, too, because they're a challenging quarry, especially when hunted with a scoped rimfire rifle, and they're tasty in a stew or potpie.



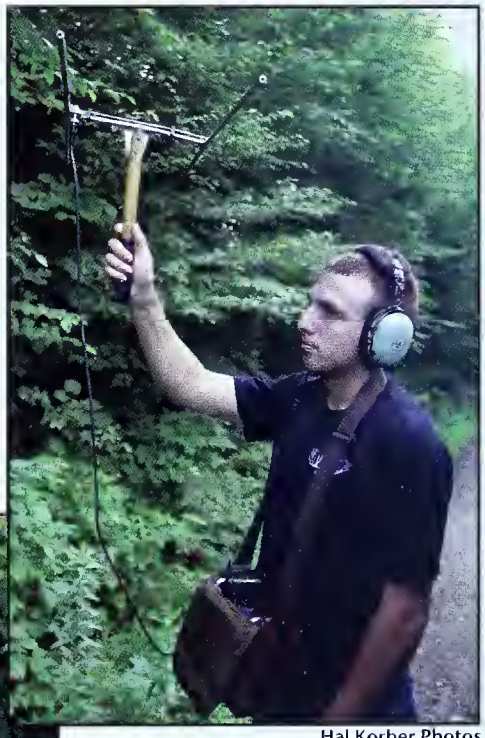
Not Seeing is Believing

By Walter "Deet" James Jr.
PGC Biologist Aide

IN JANUARY 2005 I started a new position as a biologist aide with the Game Commission. I am responsible for field research activities in WMU 4B as part of a 3-year study on doe survival, movements and response to hunting activities. I must admit, I consider myself fortunate to have been given the opportunity to be part of the ongoing research on the commonwealth's deer herd. A mere four years ago I was in a secure RV manufacturing job, where I had worked for 20 years, but I wanted an outdoor career. Initially, I decided to attend a local college part-time, and then, in the summer of 2001, I transferred to Penn State, graduating in the fall of 2004 at 44 years of age.

I share the experience of my transition from "factory to field" to demonstrate my interest and pursuit of ongoing education provided by our deer herd. Although we will never have all the answers when it comes to deer and deer management, I knew, in some way, I wanted to be part of this research project to learn more.

First, let me say I'm no stranger to whitetailed deer. I have been hunting and scouting this beautiful animal for 33 years. I spent 3½ years living and working at the Penn State Deer Research Facility under the guidance of manager Donald Wagner.





Hal Korber Photos

TOM GIEDER uses a telemetry receiver and an antenna to pick up the frequency of a radio collared deer. Once he determines the direction of the deer, he takes a compass reading.

I also earned a 4-year degree in Wildlife Science from Penn State. Let me assure you, though, when it comes to deer, I'm still learning.

After our deer-trapping season ended in April 2005, we had transmitter collars on nearly 50 female deer. Throughout the summer and fall my duties included monitoring movements and survival of these deer by locating each one at least twice a week. It's an amazing feeling to know exactly where an individual deer is hanging out.

Getting that location is accomplished through radio telemetry, a valuable research tool. Radio telemetry involves a receiver, operated by the researcher, and a transmitter collar attached to a deer. To gain an accurate location on each deer, three compass bearings, commonly called triangulation, must be accomplished. The deer's location is the area where the three bearings converge. The location is rarely accurate to a specific point. Instead, deer are considered to be located when the bearings converge within an acre or two.

Despite knowing where these deer are, and spending approximately 20 minutes near each deer, my assistant and I rarely see them. Could these collared deer be wary of us after being captured during the trapping season? In my own experience thus far, I would say no, because several deer in our study have been captured multiple times, a condition we call "trap-happy." Research has also noted that deer will often return to traps despite being handled by humans.

So why should this elusive behavior be so interesting to me, or anyone else for that matter? One reason is because we live in an era of "no deer." In fact, I remember arriving in my study area in early January and was told that, "there are no deer in this area." Well, like the cliché goes, "believe in nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see," I try to be skeptical of overgeneralizations. Despite the high antlerless deer harvests on the study area in recent years, due in part to DMAP, we still captured nearly 100 deer, half of which were males.

The deer were there this spring to be captured, and now we can follow the movements of dozens of study animals. Yet we rarely see them. To provide some perspective on this, let's look at it in terms of time spent near these deer.

My assistant and I get bearings on 9 to 16 deer per day. For the sake of this example, I'll choose 12 as my deer per day number. Actual time spent on an individual deer is usually about 20 minutes. That translates into time spent on deer at 240 minutes, or 4 hours per day. Now, let's multiply that number by two researchers over a 20-day month — we will not include weekends here. So, on average, we are in proximity to female deer for 160 hours (or nearly seven 24-hour days) every month.

At times I have been so close — and the signal so strong that the receiver could not be turned down far enough to lessen the noise — that I thought, the deer had to be right beside me, yet I couldn't see it.

You might ask, then, have we seen our own collared deer at all? The answer would, in fact, be yes. Thus far my assistant and I have seen just four of our collared deer, for a period of no more than 10 seconds total, usually because they cross a road or trail ahead of us. If you analyze that 10 seconds of actual sightings versus the actual time spent taking bearings as a percentage, well, the amount of time we actually see deer we know are there is infinitesimal.

Now, remember, we know these deer are there, even though we don't see them; the transmitter and receiver don't lie, and I can't begin to imagine how often the average person is in the woods, and has deer so close, but has

no clue any are even around.

Although deer populations have declined in recent years in many areas, our experience with "known" deer demonstrates the whitetail's ability to remain hidden. It also demonstrates the problem in making the leap from individual observations to generalizations of larger areas. Again, I'm not at all dismissing the fact that deer numbers have changed in many parts throughout the state, but our experiences do shed new light on the often heard comment of "no deer" as a common generalization of deer in the state.

In closing, I would just like to say that my intention for this article was to provide some insights into the wonderful world of the whitetail deer. It's not meant to dismiss hunter concerns or any personal comments on the state's deer herd. Rather, it's meant to open the window of knowledge and understanding. Deer, like other prey species, have the incredible ability to remain unseen, to lie motionless, moving only when forced or when the element of danger has passed. White-tailed deer have evolved to survive that way. So, perhaps at least once in a while, when we may think they're not there, in reality, they just may be. □





GIEDER (Below, standing outside of the vehicle) gets a bearing while DEET enters the information into the laptop. The program will use several compass readings and GPS to triangulate the location of the deer within an acre or two. (Right) DEET selects the radio frequency of the telemetry collar on the deer they'll locate next.

Night to Remember



RACCOON HUNTING is a favorite sport of the Snyder family, and dark, cold, starry nights with frosty leaves, crunchy cornfields and a barking coonhound are ingredients for wonderful memories.

The Snyder boys — me, my two sons (Tom Jr. and David) and Tom's 6-year-old son Tommy — decided to hunt coons on a farm near Sheakleyville in Mercer County. On this farm, the raccoons feed in fields surrounded by mature woodlots and thick grapevines, and our three generations were looking forward to a banner hunt.

We were dressed in briar resistant clothing, boots and gloves, and had lights attached to our hats. David carried a .22 rifle, skinning knives and rubber gloves, and when he opened the dog box door, out bounced Jake, a Walker coonhound. Jake is five years old and weighs about 60 pounds. He's a silent trailer, which means that he trails coons silently, but after he trees one, he barks earnestly at the base of the tree.

On this night we walked about 100 yards from the truck and I unleashed Jake who quickly disappeared into the frosty night.

By Thomas "Marmee" Snyder

Young Tommy began asking questions. "Where did Jake go? When is he coming back? Are the coons on the ground or are they up in the trees? What's that noise?"

I smiled as I remembered how his dad used to ask the same questions. Happiness filled my heart as my grandson's excitement grew, and I was becoming more excited myself. I was hoping for a coon, but I wasn't sure we'd have any success. Then, suddenly the still night air was broken by Jake's loud bawl and then sharp barks: he had treed a coon.

My wish was about to come true. Three generations of Snyders were going to get a coon.

"Let's go, Tommy. Let's go," I said. "Watch out for those cornstalks. Slow down. Jake won't leave the tree."

Jake had the raccoon treed across the cornfield, and after a 5-minute walk we were there. David reached the tree first and said, "Look there, Tommy, there it is."

When Tom reached the tree Tommy said, "Shoot, Dad. Shoot."

My wish was about to come true. Three generations of Snyders were going to get a coon. As we shined the tree, Tommy's dad took careful aim and fired. The coon fell out of the tree and landed near the dog. Instinctively, Jake grabbed it and shook it a couple of times. We put his leash on and skinned the coon on the spot. This one would make a fine addition to those we would sell to a fur dealer after the season.

We decided to quit while we were ahead and call it a night. I was the happiest grandpa in the world. My two sons and grandson were having a good time, and even Jake seemed proud of himself. It was a night I'll certainly never forget. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Spanish Best — The Fine Shotguns of Spain, Revised Second Edition, By Terry Wieland, Countrysport Press, c/o Down East Enterprises, P.O. Box 679, Camden, Maine 04843, www.countrysportpress.com, 1-800-685-7962, 332 pp., 150 color images, hardcover, $60. Blue-skied autumn days in the grouse coverts and fine double-barreled shotguns are to be remembered and cherished over a lifetime. If you're like many dedicated upland bird hunters, at one time or another, you'll likely covet a fine English side-by-side, but the cost of such a gun is beyond the means of most. There is a viable option, though, as the extraordinary shotguns produced by the craftsmen of the Basque Country in northern Spain are no longer a secret. Their shooting qualities, beauty and great value have been extolled by a host of wingshooters, who have found guns that suit their tastes and their bank accounts from makers such as AYA, Arrieta, Ugartechea, Grulla and many more. In *Spanish Best*, Terry Wieland, shooting editor of *Gray's Sporting Journal*, provides a completely updated guide to the guns and gun makers of the Basque Country, reliving history, going inside manufacturing facilities and discussing design and assembly of many models. If you're in the market for a custom made Spanish shotgun, this book is a must have reference. Terry Wieland says it best: "There is no feeling quite like knowing you have a fine new gun being sculpted for you. It gives you something to look forward to that is better than a child's Christmas."

Managing Deer — Setting the Direction

By Cal W. DuBrock
Wildlife Management Director



THE BASIC GOAL of wildlife management is healthy, functional wildlife populations that are socially acceptable. This goal is most commonly approached with species management plans.

It's often said, "If you don't know where you're going, then any path will get you there." Analysis and planning are essential to solving any issue and getting on the right path. You need to start by reviewing the current situation, then decide where you want to go and what you hope to achieve. Next, identify what needs to be done and do it. Follow up by routinely re-evaluating the situation relative to your goals.

In 2001 Game Commission staff began developing a deer management plan. Initially, the natural history of deer, past management efforts and management options were summarized. The purpose of doing this was to bring everyone with an interest in deer management to a common understanding of the past and present condition of deer populations, their requirements, status in the commonwealth and management practices that had been employed over the years. It's best to think of this step as the "inventory" stage of the planning and management process.

The agency was committed to using a stakeholder process for public input on deer management goals, i.e., the direction deer management might take. A "stakeholder" is a person who has an interest in or is directly impacted by an issue. A stakeholder list of organizations and individuals was developed, including staff within the PGC. Twenty-nine key stakeholders were invited to a meeting to identify goals for the Deer Management Plan; External stakeholders represented interests of: sportsmen, agriculture, forestry, environmental conservation, federal and state agencies, and urban-suburban municipalities. Two legislative and nine PGC representatives were invited as internal stakeholders.

The meeting was held at the C. Ted Lick Conference Center on the Wildwood Campus of the Harrisburg Area Community College in July 2002 with 27 participants present. Management consultants from the Bureau of Management Consulting in the Governor's Office of Administration facilitated the meeting. During the "icebreaker" session each participant was given the opportunity to tell a brief story about their first hunting experience. Twenty-four of twenty-seven members spoke about memorable hunting experiences, three participants who'd never hunted spoke about other nature-based experiences. The facilitator then outlined ground rules, which promoted a productive and expedited meeting. The history of deer management in Pennsylvania and associated issues and controversys were covered, and the group was brought up to date with recent changes in deer manage-

ment that have been made in the past several years. Then the group was asked to identify primary characteristics of an award-winning Deer Management Plan. Following this discussion, the group broke into five smaller groups and each group was asked to develop a vision statement. All the participants reconvened to review the vision statements developed by the five smaller groups. One vision statement was unanimously supported. Revisions were made as a group and the vast majority agreed to the following vision statement:



We will manage deer to restore and provide healthy and sustainable ecosystems with a healthy, viewable, huntable deer herd throughout the commonwealth. Deer hunting tradition runs deep in Pennsylvania, and it's often a family affair. JOHN IUSI was hunting with his grandfather, father and two brothers when he bagged this McKean County 8-point.

We will manage deer to restore and provide healthy and sustainable ecosystems with a healthy, viewable, huntable deer herd throughout the commonwealth for the benefit of our citizens and natural resources compatible with other species and land uses.

Next the participants defined goals to guide the PGC in managing whitetailed deer herds. The group developed eight goals but agreed that two were actually objectives supporting one or more of the other goals; thus the group unanimously agreed to and prioritized six goals:

1) To improve the health and sustainability of the ecosystem
2) To provide public and private landowners with the deer management tools they need to achieve their land use objectives
3) To improve and maintain a healthy deer herd
4) To increase recreational opportunities involving deer
5) To increase citizen understanding of healthy ecosystems and deer herds
6) To reduce human/deer conflicts

Facilitators reviewed goals outlined during the meeting and the participants were informed that the PGC would review them with top management and policy directors, make adjustments as needed and begin developing management strategies to meet the goals and objectives.

Following the meeting, the Deer Management Section biologists worked with internal stakeholders to review the goals and to refine objectives and strategies. Ultimately the six goals identified by the stakeholder group were consolidated into three major, overarching goals focusing on healthy deer, healthy habitat and human health and safety.

The management plan was reviewed and approved by the Executive Director and Game Commissioners on the Wildlife Management Committee then posted on the PGC website in June 2003. Those interested in viewing the plan are encouraged to visit www.pgc.state.pa.us. □

The Lake Ridge Bruiser

By Douglas Kristiansen



MEMBERS of the Sons of Israel Hunting Club were eager to help get the author's huge bear out of the woods. Good thing, too, because moving a 732-pound bear even a few feet is a monumental task. Once the bear was in the boat, though, it was smooth sailing.

I'VE BEEN an avid hunter and trapper for 35 years, and work and live at a camp in the Poconos, where nuisance bears cause a lot of damage.

The fall of 2003 was no different, as a bear that tore off the siding and learned how to rip off the steel doors was routinely breaking into one of our outbuildings.

It was the Friday before deer season when I walked over to the building and heard something fall. Not knowing what to expect, I got my handgun before going inside to investigate. The building is divided into two open rooms, and at first I didn't see anything, so I hit the side of the building and yelled.

Well, all heck broke loose, with things being knocked over. I had my gun up and spotted the bear in the back of the building. And it was big. The bear stopped and we just stared at each other. I looked at my .45, and then at the bear again, and thought, no way, this would just tick him off.

I backed out of the building and waited, and before long, out came the biggest bear I'd ever seen.

So happened, in this area of northeast Pennsylvania, bear season came back during the first week of deer season. So, the following Monday found





DOUG KRISTIANSEN killed the big bear at 9 a.m. on December 1, 2003, but remarkably had it in his truck by 11 o'clock. A tribute to ingenuity and sheer muscle power.

me on a hill that overlooks one of our lakes, watching a trail that ran through the forest. It was the perfect spot for deer and bears. It was so quiet and the lighter it got, the better the view. Behind a large blown over tree I spotted a patch of black, but it didn't resemble a bear, so I didn't think much about it. The next time I looked, however, the spot was bigger, and I knew it was a bear. I didn't have a shot, though, so I waited for what seemed like hours, but was really only a few minutes.

When the bear stepped into the open, I put the scope crosshairs of my Savage Model 99 .300 just behind its shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The bear dropped in its tracks, but when I got to within 75 yards, it got back up. I shot again, and this time the bear was down for good.

I was so excited my heart began beating in overdrive, and when I reached the bear it struck me at how big it was. I sat down next to the huge animal and relaxed, then reality and panic set in. I couldn't begin to imagine how I was ever going to get the bear out of the woods. I figured I'd start to field-dress it, but even that was impossible: I couldn't even lift the bear's leg to get it into position, so I went to get help.

That help came from the Sons of Israel Hunting Club. These guys are friends who are permitted to hunt my family's property. I found the men in their hunting camp, and when I walked in they asked, "What did you get?"

"A bear, a really big bear," I answered.

When one of the camp members, Jeff, said he would give me a hand. I told them it was going to take the whole group. They laughed, but I told them I wasn't kidding.

After reaching the bear they couldn't believe just how big it was. "Look at the size of him," they said over and over. We just stood there looking at the bear and glancing back at the big hill from where I'd shot. There was no way we were going to get him up that hill, but the lake was only about 25 yards away, so we decided the lake was the way to go.

We moved the bear so I could field-dress it while Rick went for a boat and Glen went for his ATV. I was amazed he was able to get his ATV back to the bear, but finally we were ready. We put a sling around the bear's neck and hooked it to the ATV. I figured this would be a waste of time, and that the ATV would never pull the bear, but I was wrong. There were a few places where we had to lift when it got stuck, but the ATV got the bear to the shore.

Rick soon arrived with two boats, one for the bear and the other to tow from. We pulled one of the boats up on the shore and seven of us rolled the bear into it, and then we pushed the boat back into the water. Rick was given the task of rowing



DOUG KRISTIANSEN'S bear skull measures a whopping 22 13/16 inches.

the bear across to the beach where we had a backhoe and pickup waiting. Rick was elected because we always say he's as big as a bear (although not this one). He's 6-6 and a contractor, and the strongest person I know.

Before long we all made it across the lake and got the bear loaded into the truck with the backhoe. I shot the bear at 9 o'clock and we got it to the truck at 11. Normally, it would have been a 15-minute walk.

When I took the bear to the check station, it truly sank in that this was not just another big bear. The Game Commission officials gathered all the data, and when it came time to weigh the bear the winch was having trouble lifting it off the truck. Turned out that we had to drive the truck out from under the bear to get its weight. My trophy weighed a whopping 732 pounds, and its live weight was estimated at 864 pounds. I was informed that my bear was the largest ever weighed at a check station.

I didn't have the extra money to have the bear mounted, so I gave it to my friend Russ Fowler. He had a full mount done, and now takes it to sports shows, fairs and sporting goods stores. The skull measured 22 13/16 inches by Boone & Crockett standards, and the bear was 13 years old. The meat was divided among the hunting club members. Two other bears were taken off the property that year.

It'll certainly be tough topping a bear of this size, but you never know. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Shooter's Bible, 97th Edition, Stoeger Publishing Company, 17603 Indian Head Highway, Suite 200, Accokeek, MD 20607-2501, www.stoegerpublishing.com, 1-877-GUN-BOOK, 576 pp., softcover, $24.95. Since 1924, the Shooter's Bible has served America's sportsmen as the most complete reference guide for new products, ballistics charts, specifications and up-to-date prices on thousands of firearms and related equipment. Also included is a full color section with exciting articles by firearms experts. This book is a must for anyone interested in firearms and the shooting sports.



And Some Change

By Dave Dufford

I MUST ADMIT, I'm not a deer hunter. That's not to say I haven't or won't hunt deer, but my deer hunting is, at best, casual. I've bagged a couple deer over the years, but I seldom go out more than an hour or so one or two days a season, and more to take the rifle for a walk than anything else.

It was the second Monday of the season, and it had been light for at least an hour before I left the house and neared the tree line at the far edge of a wide field. After entering the trees I was

still-hunting through some tall pines covering an old stripmine when something at the edge of a field on the far side of the woods caught my eye.

The early morning sun illuminating the heavy frost that clung to each stem of a large bush made it look like it was alive with color. I stopped when I came up alongside it, leaning first to the right and then to the left to enjoy the sparkling colors and the way my slightest movement caused them to change. A second later, when I took my first step to walk away, a grouse roared out from somewhere in the thick cover behind me.

I wondered whether the sight of any buck could excite me more than the way a flushing grouse sets my heart pounding during grouse season. Perhaps, but it's bird hunting that calls me to the hills and valleys throughout most of the fall, to hear the rush of their wings when my dog puts them to flight. Even in deer season the sound of a flush causes me to look around, half expecting to see the flash of Annie's liver and white coat somewhere deep in the brambles of a thicket.

Smaller than most English springers, Annie is closer to the size of a cocker, and her diminutive stature allows her to nose her way into the thickest of places. She is one of the hardest working dogs I've ever hunted with. There were four days that November that, with Annie's help, turned out to be among the best hunting days I've ever had:

One Tuesday

Business in town had taken up the morning one Tuesday in early November, so it was already 2:30 before we began our hunt. We were hunting through some pines on an old stripmine when I noticed a grouse flushing far out ahead of us, and a short time later we doubled back to where I suspected it had landed. Annie and I were working the cover along the edge of an overgrown field when she flushed the grouse about 15 yards to my left. I easily dropped the bird, which had banked left and flew straight away. A few days earlier I had managed to drop a grouse with my 16-gauge double, but for this day I had borrowed my son's 20-gauge Mossberg, and this grouse was the first I'd gotten with it.

A few minutes later, a timberdoodle wove its way through the cover. I got off a quick shot and saw it start to go down before it went out of sight, but because woodcock are noted for making short flights, I didn't think my shot had connected. Annie was still nosing the scent where the bird had flushed, so I called her over to follow up on the shot, just in case. I was expecting a second flush but, instead, I watched as she nosed beneath a lone pine and then picked up the woodcock and trotted back to me.

Annie flushed another grouse a while later, but I was completely unprepared and too slow to get off a shot before it was gone. We hadn't gone even another hundred yards before she got excited and flushed two hen pheasants. She still acted birdy, though, so I continued to follow as she worked her way on out across a large field. Only a minute passed before two more hens came up, and a moment later a rooster came cackling up out of the cover. He never came up very high, though, and by the time I got a look at him he was just dropping out of sight down over the hill.

In the next half hour Annie reflushed the last grouse she'd put up and flushed two more. I didn't get a look at the first two flushes, because the birds came up among the thick crabapples, and I missed the last one when it flew across an opening.

After hunting our way through the crabapples, we hit a field, and it was obvious Annie was finding scent, but it wasn't hot. After awhile, though, she struck fresh scent, which turned out to be two roosters on the run. By the time they came up they were just a little out of range, particularly because I'd brought along only light 7½ loads, thinking I'd be flushing only grouse or woodcock.

It wasn't long until Annie flushed another hen pheasant, and by then it was time to start hunting our way home. At the far end of a field, Annie flushed the ninth pheasant of the day. The rooster came up close, slightly ahead and uphill to my right, cutting across from right to left. My first shot sent feathers flying and the second sent him tumbling into the treetops along the edge of the field. Annie made her third retrieve of the day, and after we had quit she flushed two more roosters from some cover along the road just before we got home.

Early the Next Morning

Having flushed so many pheasants, early the next morning I decided to see if any were still around, and I chose my 12-gauge Mossberg pump. Annie was birdy soon after we started working along the upper side of a field. The rooster had gone into the edge of the woods on a hill just above us, and when Annie put him up he flew directly over me. When he was out over the field, a heavy load of No. 6s dropped him.

Soon after, when she hit scent again, I thought my pheasant hunting for the day may be over, but I wasn't taking my shooting into consideration. Annie quickly put up two more roosters, but I missed them both. A few seconds later, she flushed a grouse that vanished, unseen, through the woods beyond. Perhaps 20 minutes later I missed another rooster Annie flushed, and shortly after that I bagged one she put up from a narrow strip of brambles bordering a stream. It was only 9:30, but I decided that five birds in two days was good enough and called it a day.



The Next Day

The next day it was close to noon when we went out. It had been warm all

fall, and this day was no exception, as I was soon sweating in spite of wearing a lightweight shirt. Concentrating on grouse and woodcock, I was carrying an old 20-gauge Model 37 Ithaca pump that had been my father's. We hunted for some time without a flush, and when Annie's first flush went up unseen in some thick cover, I thought that this might be the way the day would go. It was a woodcock, so I figured there was a good chance Annie could flush it again. I was right, and when the little bird came weaving its way into the air I sent a light load of 7½s after it. When I saw the puff of feathers I quickly lowered the gun, hoping to get a good look at where the bird would fall. It didn't fall, though, and I was so surprised that I didn't get off a second shot as it flew away. I'd never seen a woodcock that didn't drop after losing that many feathers.

It's bird hunting that calls me to the hills and valleys throughout most of the fall, to hear the rush of their wings when my dog puts them to flight.

Normally I let birds go after a second flush, but because this one was winged, I sent Annie after it. I could see her pursuing the bird as it made short, hopping flights, and she soon nabbed it and brought it to me.

We didn't have far to go before Annie flushed a grouse, but I missed. Later, she flushed a pair of hen pheasants, and then she found one last grouse. It came up fast from a thick patch of undergrowth in some fairly open woods, but was about to vanish in some crabapples. My shot dropped it right at the edge of the thicker trees, and as Annie retrieved her seventh bird in three days I was having a hard time believing my good fortune.

A few years ago I went shopping with a new .22 in mind, but when I happened to see a little single-shot 20-gauge I forgot all about getting a rifle. I've always enjoyed using a single-shot, and even when I was much younger I appreciated their light weight. So when I saw the tiny New England Firearms Limited Edition I bought it.

A cut down youth model, with a 22-inch barrel and a length of pull of only 12¾ inches, the metal is blued, and the laminated stock sports a limited edition medallion. Despite its small size, not having a second shot has proved to be its greatest handicap in my hands.

Friday Afternoon

When I started out that Friday afternoon I was convinced my run of good luck was over. We hadn't been out very long, however, when I noticed Annie getting excited as she worked some thick cover bordering the edge of a stand of tall pines.

She put a grouse up just to the left and ahead of me, and as it cleared the ground cover it hooked away to my right. The little gun popped and a cloud of feathers drifted through the air as the bird tumbled down beneath the pines. After I put that bird in my vest, Annie flushed another grouse no more than 40 yards farther along, but I missed it just before it flew across a wide open field. Well, that's hunting with a single-shot.

We continued hunting and

eventually left the woods and headed to the fields to see if we could find any pheasants. We skirted the edge of a large marsh for half an hour before Annie began acting birdy. She vanished into some tall reeds just seconds before a rooster began to cackle. He finally showed above the cover, so close that I had to let him get some distance before I fired — and missed.

Continuing on, Annie flushed a grouse in some crabapples, but I didn't see it. Minutes later she flushed another one that offered a shot, but I missed again. After hunting our way to an overgrown field some distance away she flushed a woodcock, which I missed, and a short time later she found another one. I wasn't able to see it well enough for a shot, but she was able to flush this one again — and I missed again. That was the fifth bird I'd missed, after getting the grouse with my first shot of the day; my lucky streak definitely seemed to be over.

We hadn't gone another hundred yards before the sound of a flushing grouse caught my attention. Annie was right in front of me so it wasn't she that flushed it, but at least I was able to see that it had flown straight away and we could try for a reflush. Annie quickly disappeared into cover so thick I completely lost sight of her, and I reflushed the bird myself. Once again I got off a shot that didn't appear to touch a feather, but as birds can get out of sight so quickly in crabapples, it's always worth following up to be sure. It took me a moment to locate Annie, but by the time I traveled 30 yards she vanished once again. I called her several times and blew the whistle, but to no avail. Maybe someday I'll learn not to try to out-hunt the dog, but about the time I was ready to go looking for her, I noticed her moving toward me through the thick undergrowth with a grouse in her mouth. That was one retrieve I'll never forget.



Annie had retrieved the last grouse less than 50 yards from where I stood looking at that glittering bush a few weeks later during deer season. When I moved on, my steps skirted that thick tangle where the grouse had fallen unseen, and as I passed I happened to notice another object sparkling in the bright morning sunlight. I reached down and picked up a shiny dime that rested on top of a frosted leaf. I didn't see any deer that morning, but the walk brought back a wealth of memories from the bird season . . . and some change, too. □

The Water Case

By Robert Einodshofer
Huntingdon County WCO

"YOU JUST missed him." "I saw him do it, but I won't testify." "If I tell you, they'll come back on me." I hear those statements all too often, but one family finally had all they could take. Every year there always seemed to be a large buck on their property or adjoining property that would never make it to the season. Then came the evening of Sunday, November 24.

Around 7 p.m. Deputy Lanny Cornelius received a call from a member of the family who said they had just noticed a spotlight and heard a shot below their house. Two of the family members jumped in their vehicle and as they reached the end of their driveway, a truck sped past them. Their headlights illuminated the inside of the suspect's vehicle, though, and they identified Mike Water as the driver. They couldn't identify a second person, nor were they able to get the license number.

When Deputy Cornelius arrived, the witnesses were at the field where the spotlighting had gone on. Searching along the road Deputy Cornelius noticed a group of deer that didn't seem to want to leave the area. A quick scan of the field soon revealed a 10-point buck that had, it turned out, been killed by a single gunshot. Lanny photographed the evidence and obtained written statements from the witnesses. Knowing the history of the suspects he was dealing with, and finally having enough evidence and witness support to prosecute, he waited for backup to arrive.

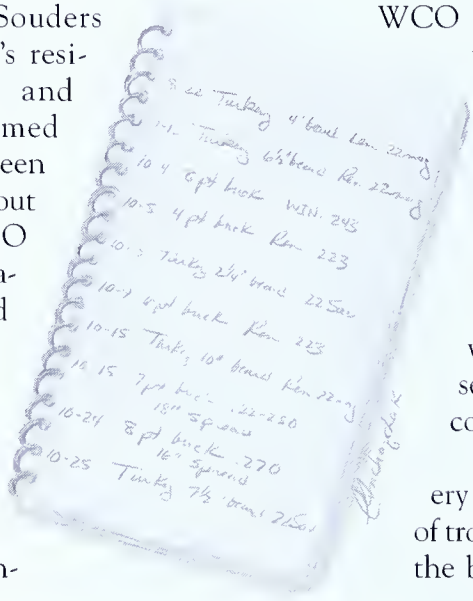
Scott Rheam



SOME OF THE evidence taken in the Water case. Forty or so other racks that hadn't been found were recorded in the notebook.

Within minutes Fulton County WCO Travis Pugh arrived, along with Fish and Boat Commission WCO Corey Britcher and Deputy Berley Souders. Deputy Cornelius and WCO Britcher went to the residence of the suspect's father, while WCO Pugh and Deputy Souders went to the suspect's residence. Cornelius and Britcher were informed that Mike had not been there, so they sought out WCO Pugh. WCO Pugh found Mike Water at his residence and was told he had been there all evening and, of course, had no involvement in any poaching.

I had no idea all this was transpiring until I walked in the door from being out with friends for dinner and noticed my answering machine blinking. Immediately, I was out the door to help. When I met up with everyone, we went to do a necropsy on the deer. Luck was with us as I found a jacketed bullet from the shoulder opposite of the entry wound. I could tell it was a .22. We knew from WCO Bircher's case against Mike Water for poaching walleyes the previous spring that he owned a .22-250, because it was in the vehicle during that incident. A coincidence? We thought not, and decided that WCO Pugh, because the suspect lived in Fulton County, would apply for a search warrant the following morning.



The unique aspect of the notebook was that there was no cover on it, and as soon as it was pulled out of a messy drawer the first page showed the kills for the season.

The following morning was the opening of bear season, so we all conducted our routine patrols until Travis notified us he had the warrant. Around lunchtime, WCO Pugh, Rich Palmer from the Bureau of Law Enforcement in Harrisburg at the time, Deputy Cornelius, Deputy Coy Hill, WCO Britcher and I, along with PGC videographer Scott Rheam, served the warrant.

Our main focus was to locate the firearm and any unlawful wildlife that may have been taken. Little did we know how big this search was about to become.

The first major discovery was a large trash bag full of trophy deer racks found in the basement. As the officers proceeded upstairs they located a gun cabinet and the firearms. As WCO Britcher was searching the drawer of the cabinet for ammunition, he found a spiral-bound notebook listing dates, animals and caliber of firearms used for many unlawful kills.

When the search of the house was complete, we moved to the outbuildings and vehicles. There, in a shed, a large box of deer racks was found. This brought the total antler count to 42 sets. Mike's pickup was in the driveway. After searching the vehicle it became obvious that this guy was a killing machine. Several boxes of .22-250 ammunition, both loaded and spent cases, were found in the truck, along with a receipt of purchase only several days prior. Twelve gauge shells, .22 and .223 am-

munition was also scattered throughout the vehicle. A spotlight and a 7mm rifle were lying on the front seat, with five live cartridges in the cup holder on the dash. Strangely enough, we did not find a .22-250. The truck bed had just been washed, but dried blood was evident on the tailgate. Satisfied all the evidence had been collected, we left.



Scott Rheam

WCO ROBERT EINODSHOFER with some of the evidence in the Water case. The poacher in this case was fined more than $28,000 plus more than $2,000 in laboratory fees.

Several days later we met at the region office to start sorting through the evidence and preparing it for testing. It was then we realized that deciphering the evidence was going to be like solving a 1,000-piece puzzle. We laid out all the deer racks and began trying to match them with dates in the notebook. Some entries were more specific than others. Many were just listed as "8-point," say, but others were more specific stating, for instance, "8-point with 16-inch spread." Some were old and some were fresh. Several still had velvet on them.

We were able to match all of the racks we had to entries, but there were 40 or so other racks recorded that we hadn't found. We also discovered that we didn't have any beards for the 54 gobblers he had recorded. These entries were very specific, from 1/4- to 10-inch beards. The most intriguing discovery was that for 26 years he kept records, but the notebook suddenly ended in March 2001. We then recalled that he had a computer at home. Could this outlaw have gone "hi-tech" on us?

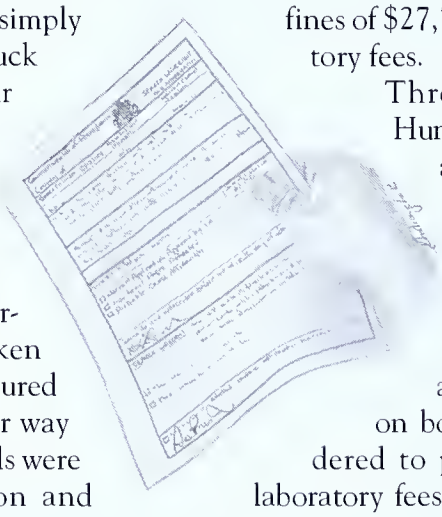
Several weeks later, after sorting out everything we had, we met with the Fulton County district attorney about our findings and our suspicions that Water's record system might now be computerized. At this point the DA wanted more information before prosecuting. If the computer held more recent records he would feel more comfortable, and he instructed us to draw up a warrant for the computer.

On December 17, we served the second warrant, for the computer, discs and related evidence. We thought this would be a simple search, until fresh meat was discovered and the turkey beards were found in an ammo crate. Travis immediately tried to locate the on-duty district justice, to obtain another search warrant, and several hours later, he returned with one. In the ammo box were 53 of the 54 turkey beards Water had recorded, and we now felt confident we had all the evidence needed for prosecution.

We reviewed the case with both county district attorneys and discovered we weren't done with serving warrants yet. While our warrant was good to seize the computer as evidence, the wording we used didn't allow us to access the contents of the computer. Now that the evidence was

stored at the region office in Huntingdon County, another warrant had to be drawn up in Huntingdon County and served to Mr. Water to have its contents downloaded, as well as the undeveloped film that had been seized. All legal grounds now covered, everything could be submitted and analyzed.

We knew this was going to be a complex case. The statute of limitations had run out on most entries as far as the illegal killings, but we did have possession of parts of illegal deer and turkeys. We knew that part of his defense would be to simply claim to have killed a buck and a turkey every year that he hunted. Checking, we learned that Water had never filed a harvest report card here or in any of our adjoining states. Deciphering his notebook had taken many hours, and we figured there had to be an easier way to find out which animals were killed legally in season and which were not.



LMO Steve Kleiner volunteered to work up a computer program that could process the entries if we provided him with the information. So, into the realm of computer data entry I went. In the end, a touch of a button told us if each animal could have been killed in season, was out of season or multiple kills in season. All the seasons and bag limits were supplied by Harrisburg dating back to 1979. What that allowed us to do was give Water the benefit of the doubt for 10 deer racks and two gobblers that could have been killed legally during the season.

Now we were ready. After consulting with district attorneys from both counties, the decision was made that the poaching incident that started the investigation and what was subsequently discovered during the searches were unrelated cases, and we would not have to consolidate the charges.

On March 14, 2003, one count of unlawful use of lights while hunting and one count of loaded firearms in a vehicle were filed in Huntingdon County, and 86 counts of unlawful possession, one count of failure to file a report card and one count of failure to sign a license were filed in Fulton County. The Fulton County case was heard first, on June 23, 2003, and in a packed courtroom Michael Water was found guilty on all 88 counts and ordered to pay fines of $27,750 and $420 in laboratory fees.

Three days later, in Huntingdon County, Water and his counsel failed to show for the hearing. The case was held in abstentia, again in front of a packed courtroom, and he was found guilty on both counts and was ordered to pay fines of $700 and laboratory fees of $1,715. The defendant has appealed the decisions to both county courts.

This is not the end of the story. Three days after the case broke, the intimidation of witnesses started: Nails were placed in driveways; an entire pasture of high tensile fence was cut; lug nuts on a vehicle were loosened; a gas tank on a pickup was punctured; a skinned and headless deer carcass was placed below a driveway; bullet holes were found in pole buildings; deer heads in front yards and, most serious, two cattle were killed by arrows. These families never had problems until they reported this information, and this is probably a main reason witnesses never came forward before with information on this poacher. The witnesses are to be commended for their willingness to come forward and report these wildlife crimes. □

Keeping Our Wildlife Out of the ER

By Lori D. Richardson
Wildlife Education Specialist

PROSPECTS for our nongame wildlife most in need of help are looking better and better. For the fourth year in a row, Congress has appropriated — and the President has approved — millions of dollars of federal aid to support wildlife management for species of special concern. The aid comes in the form of State Wildlife Grants (SWG).

Some call it non-traditional funding for non-traditional species. Lisa Williams, PGC Wildlife Diversity Biologist, calls it "keeping common species common." She says that this proactive, rather than reactive, approach to wildlife management "gives us time to intervene while we can still make a difference — before these species need expensive emergency room-type care like those on the endangered and threatened species lists."

SWG money is available only to state agencies responsible for wildlife management. In Pennsylvania, where we have two agencies responsible for wildlife (the PGC for mammals and birds and the PFBC for fish, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic invertebrates), the agencies work together to compile a group of projects that reflects the species most in need.

Federal funds acquired must then be matched, 25 to 50 percent, depending on the types of projects approved. Matching money, often in the form of

Greg Turner



A NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL gets fitted with a radio-collar and eartag.

Northern Flying Squirrel — Threatened

The northern flying squirrel is a resident of mature and old growth forests. State Wildlife Grants support the monitoring of this elusive and intriguing mammal, including radio-telemetry, nest box surveillance, genetic analyses, and investigations into the interactions between the northern flying squirrel and the southern flying squirrel.

Bats and Wind Turbines

Wind turbines, a clean energy source gaining popularity, have turned out to be a major threat to bats. Biologists are still searching for the reason why bats seem to be attracted to and then killed by the turbines. In an exciting new project, a wind farm being constructed in the Northeast part of the state is aiding in a study to help determine the effects of the farm on local and migrant bat populations.

Cal Butchkoski



Endangered INDIANA BAT

in-kind services, comes from both agencies as well as the third party conservation groups and universities involved in the approved projects.

This year the President approved $80 million for SWG, and Pennsylvania will receive $2 million. Since the program's inception, the state has received nearly $8.4 million. Further, by partnering with conservation organizations statewide we are stretching the benefits of those funds and amplifying the effects of our efforts.

All of the funding is directed by the state's new Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), a plan Congress requires of each state receiving money. When creating our draft CWCS, we solicited thoughts from conservation organizations across the state. When completed, the strategy will prioritize wildlife and wildlife habitats to allocate grant monies and management efforts most appropriately statewide and across both agencies. "We've submitted a draft to Congress," Williams says, "and we want to spend the next year working with our conservation partners and interested individuals to refine the plan and start implementing it on the ground at regional and local levels."

Most SWG funding is devoted to baseline research to help us learn more about the state's 164 mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates we believe are at risk, including those that are threatened or endangered. Funding also supports wildlife diversity biologist positions and land acquisition.

Many species' population declines are tied to declines in available habitat. And, in turn, multi-species management is a technique gaining momentum, because it is often more effective to focus on a specific habitat that benefits many species than to concentrate lots of effort on a single species. Barrens habitats, for example, are an important component of this year's grant projects because they support many imperiled species and require specialized managment. Other habitats hosting large percentages of species at risk are wetlands, grasslands and large blocks of forest.

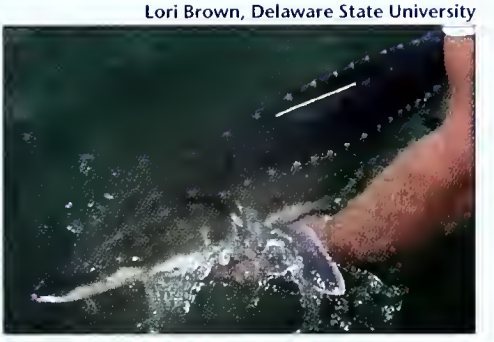
"Some of the commonwealth's biggest conservation concerns are invisible to most people," says Williams. "For instance, 90 percent of the shorthead garter snake's global range is in Pennsylvania. The snake tends to get overlooked here because it's abundant, but if we lose it here, it's likely to be lost completely. The shorthead is threatened by the same issue as many of our at risk birds — loss of moist grassland habitat.

"We're also keeping an eye on the Allegheny woodrat; it has disappeared from all neighboring states except West Virginia. Pennsylvania is vitally important because we have a large percentage of the woodrat's remaining population, despite the fact that

Atlantic Sturgeon — Threatened

Atlantic Sturgeon spend most of their life in the open ocean but spawn in freshwater. They used to be a common fish of the Delaware River before the fishery rapidly declined in the early 1900s. Sonic transmitters are now being used to determine habitat parameters and spawning locations. The information being collected might help determine the most appropriate location for a liquid natural gas terminal seeking a site near the mouth of the river.

Lori Brown, Delaware State University



An ATLANTIC STURGEON with a newly implanted transmitter is released.

we're on the northern edge of its range. The problem with the woodrat is that while both its range and population are decreasing, nobody knows why."

That's why SWG funding is so important: For the first time in history we are in a position to manage declining wildlife populations before they reach critical levels that require expensive and intense management efforts, before they reach such dire straits that even our best efforts may fall short. Whether you're a hunter, trapper, fisherman, seasoned birder or casual wildlife observer, Congress has given us a chance to preventatively and proactively protect your valuable wildlife resource; be sure to ask your congressman to continue supporting State Wildlife Grants and the important management efforts they're funding to keep our wildlife out of the emergency room. □

Migrating Raptors and Songbirds

Widespread population declines in many migratory bird species is an urgent conservation concern. Two SWG projects are investigating habitats used by avian migrants. Migrating birds must stop frequently en route to rest and replenish their energy. Local and landscape-level habitat changes along a migrant's flyway can impact migration success. One project is using radar to identify stopover habitats and working to protect them. The Appalachian Mountains, for example, are recognized internationally as a critical migrant corridor. As development continues to intrude on the mountains, another project is using radio-telemetry to study the roosting and foraging habitats of raptors in hopes of encouraging migrant-friendly development in the future.

Ken Thompson courtesy of Hawk Mountain



This after-second-year (ASY) COOPER'S HAWK (COHA) has been banded and fitted with a radio-transmitter mounted above his tail.

Solo Grousing

By Charles Fergus



I GET GREAT PLEASURE from hunting ruffed grouse behind my spaniels, but there are times when I'm not up for the constant intensity that's part of following a springer through bird cover. Some days I like to be in the brush by myself. I've found there's a huge reward to be reaped from trying to outfox grouse while hunting solo.

In fact, that's probably the way most hunters pursue grouse. For whatever reason — living in a city, dwelling in a small apartment, not having the ready cash to buy a good dog or the time or inclination to train one —a great many gunners today do not hunt behind dogs. Savvy hunters are not overly disadvantaged by going it alone. But it takes know how to find grouse, put them in the air so you can get a decent shot, and locate them if and when you connect. Also, I've found that the lessons I have learned from occasionally hunting by myself help me to better direct my dogs and improve our performance when we hunt together.

Critical to the venture is hunting in the right places. If you simply wander through open woods, you may stumble onto a bird now and then, but you won't fill your game pouch with any consistency. Grouse like edges — openings where sunlight spurs the growth of brush and vines that provide the food and cover on which *Bonasa umbellus* depends. And that brushy habitat should be located near escape and resting cover, mainly conifers, such as pines and hemlocks. Other types of escape cover include mountain laurel, rhododendron, tangles of wild grape and greenbrier, logging slash, trees toppled by storms and dense scrub oak.

Conifers often grow near damp areas, so hunting along stream courses and the edges of swamps can produce birds. It pays to hunt near escape and roosting areas toward day's end, because grouse will be moving back to those areas of shelter to spend the night. During the

day, they'll be out feeding and loafing in microhabitats closer to food sources.

Learn what the grouse in your area eat. Preferred foods vary from place to place, and also from year to year, depending on conditions during the growing season and on which plants have produced abundant foodstuffs. In early fall, grouse rely on leaves, fruits, mast and berries. They eat a few buds in early autumn, but they mainly turn to buds later in winter, when snow may cover up ground foods. Hawthorn fruits (thornapples and hawsies are local names), wild grapes, and small acorns are perennial favorites. Barberries are an excellent food. Rosehips aren't a high-preference item, but in years when other berries fail, grouse often turn to them.



I have shot grouse that had been feeding heavily on the black, pointed seeds of witch-hazel, and also on the pale yellow blossoms of that autumn-flowering shrub, which is becoming increasingly abundant in Pennsylvania's woods and brushlands. When grouse switch over to buds in late fall and winter, they choose apple, birch, aspen, cherry and blueberry, among others. Once I bagged a grouse whose crop was full of the long, coppery-colored, spindle-shaped buds of American beech. (The crop is a membranous sac that holds food for a short period after it has been eaten; this organ is located just under the skin, where the neck meets the breast.) Later in the season, grouse also eat the seeds clustered in the red bobs of sumacs. And they pick up greens along the edges of spring seeps, water sources that remain open after others have frozen over.

Check the crops of every bird you bag. Use a field guide to identify as many of the food items as possible, and keep a list of foods by date. Ask your hunting acquaintances to save crops from their birds, as well. As you gain experience, you'll begin to recognize combinations of food-bearing plants and cover-providing vegetation where you can consistently find birds. When you prospect less-familiar places, look for those same combinations.

It's one thing to find good cover and flush grouse, but getting open shots at those swift gamebirds represents another level of accomplishment. When you hear a grouse flush wild, make a concerted effort to spot the bird and determine its flight direction, particularly the last moments of its final glide. Grouse rarely fly more than a few hundred yards, and often they can be flushed again — and, fortunately for the dogless hunter, they usually hold tighter for that second flush.

When following up on a flushed bird, aim for a landmark (a specific tree, a prominent rock) near where you think it came down. As you get closer, look for discrete patches of cover. When a grouse lands, it often sets down in a relatively open area, probably because it's easier and safer to alight in such a place. Then it quickly walks or runs to a thicker spot that offers concealment, such as a fallen tree or a grape tangle. If you move along briskly in the direction that a flushed grouse has flown, you may be able to pin the bird in a cover patch where it has temporarily sought shelter.

Approaching a likely piece of escape cover, don't simply wade into its closest part. Instead, swing out to one side or the other, then pinch back in so that you intersect the patch at its far edge. Often a grouse will run into a cover patch, then sneak to its opposite end. The bird is banking on its pursuer following directly behind it. If you surprise the bird by suddenly appearing near it, you may cause it to flush, offering a decent shot. If possible, ascend any slope and make your final advance from the upper side. From there, you'll be able to see over any intervening brush, allowing easier shooting. The take-home lesson is to approach a bird from the direction in which you think it wants to fly.

A lot of hunters pussyfoot along in search of grouse. I don't often follow that tactic, because I think it gives the birds too much time to sort through their options. Before I owned a bird dog, I had a partner who taught me a lot about grouse hunting. On most days, Mark strode quickly through the game cover. He had discovered that he could often get close to birds by moving aggressively. We would usually hunt side by side. One of us would advance for 20 or 30 yards, then stop in a fairly open area from which he could shoot if the opportunity presented itself, and then the other would move along with equal alacrity. This seesaw approach plays on birds' nerves and often causes them to flush.

If grouse are sitting tight — which they may do on a frosty morning or in damp, drizzly weather — a somewhat slower pace may be called for, or you may find the birds flushing behind you. As you move through the cover, stop periodically. When you stop, make sure your left foot is out in front, because that way you'll be able to swing your gun readily to either the left or the right. (The left-handed shooter should station his or her right foot in front). If I think that a grouse may be close at hand, I will often advance using a shuffle step — putting the left foot forward, then sliding the right foot after it. That way I'm always ready to shoot.

Look ahead into the cover and try to plan your route, both to check out likely spots and to avoid getting into blind alleys where you must crawl under a leaning tree, cross over a trunk by straddling it, or fight your way through vines. As soon as you slow down, a grouse resting nearby will start to get nervous, and it will probably take off when you are out of position, off balance, or otherwise at a disadvantage. In general, try to hunt at a steady, moderate pace. The idea is to make the birds flush when you want them to, neither too early nor too late for a shot.

Everybody thinks grouse are lightning-fast fliers. It's true that most shots must be taken quickly, but rushing usually results in your failing to cheek the stock properly and taking an awkward, inaccurate shot. "Make haste promptly" is a good phrase to commit to memory. On the clays course, try to develop a smooth swing and an uninterrupted follow-through. I go to the skeet range with a few friends; we shoot with the gun down, taking as many shots at each station as we need, and nobody bothers keeping score. I also like to practice with one partner, using a hand thrower to launch claybirds for each other in real game cover.

When hunting, listen carefully as you thread your way through the brush. Sometimes you will hear a grouse's footfalls as it runs for a few steps before taking off. Or you may be tipped off by a "mewling" vocalization that a suspicious grouse often emits. Get ready when you

hear those sounds, because they usually presage the thunder of wings.

When hunting with a dog, I will sometimes chance a longer shot, one that may not kill a bird outright. My spaniels have good noses, and they are adept at trailing and finding wounded game. When I leave the dogs at home, I pass on the longer, more questionable shots.

After taking a shot, if you can't actually watch the grouse to see if you hit it, advance quickly for a dozen or so yards, then stop and listen intently. A wounded grouse usually will try to fly a couple of times after it comes down and before it goes off to hide. A bird pricked in the body by a pellet or two is likely to fly a greater distance and then die after falling or landing. In general, wounded grouse don't run very far before tucking in.

I remember one bird that I had hit lightly. Fortunately there was a skim of snow on the ground. Searching, here and there I would find a single footprint in the paper-thin covering. The intermittent, faint scratch marks covered about 30 yards and led to a small stream. The grouse had run down the bank, crossed the frozen rivulet, and ducked into a crevice under the far side. I spotted the last inch of a black, gray and russet tailfeather sticking out of a crack.

Veteran grouse hunter and wildlife artist Ned Smith shared the following tip with me many years ago, and it has paid off on numerous occasions. When a bird falls in thick cover, don't look for its shape or outline. Instead, search for a spot of creamy gray. A fallen grouse usually shows some part of its pale underside, which contrasts more noticeably with the leaves than does the bird's brown upper parts.

The solo hunter trying to bag a grouse undertakes what is probably the most challenging and the purest form of bird hunting. I know of no better way to learn the ins and outs of a specific bird cover — as well as the character of *Bonasa umbellus* — than by picking up my shotgun, leaving my dog whistle behind and setting off to match wits with the local ruffs. □



Scout Brings Community Together

By Bob V. Danenhower Sr.

BOB V. DANENHOWER JR. has been scouting since he became a cub scout at age eight. WCO Mike Behm and Land Manager Dave Mitchell have worked closely with his troop, which adopted SGL 205 as its Biannual Environmental Service Project. Every spring and fall since 1996, the scouts, leaders and parents complete a cleanup and conservation project on SGL 205.

SGL 205 is approximately 1,800 acres and has 15 parking lots. In the parking lots there are bulletin boards where rules, notices and maps and displayed. Many of the bulletin boards, however, were old or, in some cases, nonexistent. Bob contacted Land Manager Mitchell to discuss the idea of building and erecting new bulletin boards to enhance the game lands and also fulfill the requirements of his Eagle Scout project.

To become an Eagle Scout a young man must design, lead and execute a project that benefits his community. Mitchell was delighted and, with the PGC's encouragement, Bob got to work designing and pricing materials. He estimated that each sign backer would cost about $40 and that he'd need 17 of them.

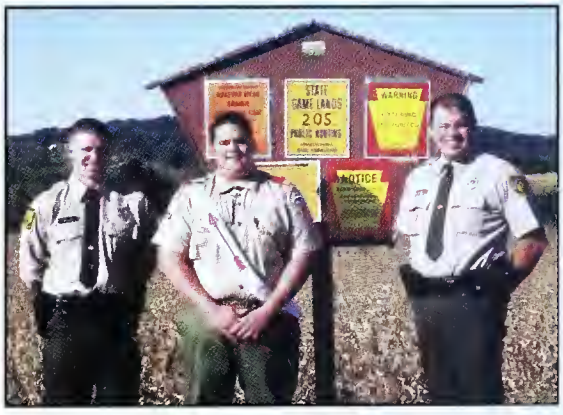
The only obstacle to the project was funding. Bob decided to write a letter explaining the project and asking for sponsors. Each sign backer would include a brass plate acknowledging Bob, the troop and the sponsor. Letters were then sent to local sportsmen's clubs and businesses, and to Bob's surprise, the checks came pouring in. A local gunsmith even offered to engrave the brass plaques.

In July, Bob invited Troop 72 members to help build the backers and then, on the following day, to celebrate by shooting clay birds. A local sporting clays range allowed the boys to shoot for only the cost of birds, three instructors donated their time, and a family friend donated the ammo. Lots of scouts turned out to build and paint, and then all the boys broke clays, many the first time.

With the backers built, Bob and Mitchell determined the best locations for the signs and drilled the holes. Then, on a rainy Saturday in August, scouts, parents and friends turned out to install and level the sign backers.

On January 18, my son became an Eagle Scout and I couldn't be more proud of his accomplishments. I'm also very thankful for the Game Commission, scouts, sportsmen and friends who helped him achieve his goal. □

Lehigh County WCO MIKE BEHM, BOB JR. and Land Manager DAVE MITCHELL celebrate in front of one of the completed sign backers on SGL 205.



FIELD NOTES

Just Chillin'

LACKAWANNA — One hot summer day, while driving down the road that goes across SGL 300 in Jefferson Township, I noticed something black in the road. At first I thought it was a culvert pipe uncovered by erosion, but when I got closer I noticed it was a bear lying in the middle of the dirt road. As I slowly drove toward the bruin, he looked at me, and then casually stood up and walked into the brush. I drove up to where the bear had been lying and noticed a puddle of water only 20 inches in diameter. With the lack of rain this past summer, any water source was a blessing.

— DEPUTY ROBERT KRUKOVITZ, OLYPHANT

Multiple Benefits

MERCER — The introduction of cell phones has been beneficial for wildlife in several ways. Concerned citizens and hunters have been able to phone in violations while they're occurring, allowing WCOs to recieve information while on the way to the scene. On another level (a high one), the platforms at the top of the cell towers seem to have been custom made for osprey nesting. We discovered another nest on a cell phone tower on the Mercer/Lawrence county line.

— WCO JAMES J. DONATELLI, MERCER

Perks

MONTOUR & NORTHUMBERLAND — I rounded a bend on a dirt road and noticed a garbage truck parked on the berm. Randy Watts, of Ted Heaps Container Service in Millville, was picking up a customer's trash that had been scattered by a bear. I asked him if that was part of his job duties. With a grin and a wink, he said it wasn't, but it sure helped to boost the Christmas tip. With all the bears we have, tips should be big this year.

— WCO RANDY SHOUP, DANVILLE

Bears Galore

LYCOMING — Nuisance bears were sure keeping me busy. In an 11-day span in August I captured three raiding cornfields.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT



That'll Teach Him

SOMERSET — One of my neighboring WCOs found out the hard way that cell phones are distracting. While talking, he inadvertently backed up too close to a culvert trap, and the small bear inside decided it was payback time for getting caught. The bear nipped him in the seat of his pants. I wonder what reason he'll give for ordering new trousers.

— WCO TRAVIS ANDERSON, SOMERSET

Learned a Lesson

SOMERSET — I was hooking up a culvert trap to my vehicle when my cell phone rang. It was Rich Stoner, one of my HTE instructors. While talking, I evidently backed up too close to the front door. I felt something hit me from behind, and Rich could tell by the inflection of my voice that something had just happened. I confirmed his suspicion that the bear nipped me, and then we both had a good laugh.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Above and Beyond

CRAWFORD — I would like to recognize the heroic efforts of wildlife conservation officers from Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas for their rescue and cleanup work following Hurricane Katrina. Although largely unnoticed, conservation officers from these and probably other states played a major role in many capacities. To our southern counterparts, I salute you for your unselfish dedication.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE



SGL 61, Joe

MCKEAN — After capturing and processing a 280-pound nuisance bear, I relocated it to a remote section of SGL 61. When I arrived at the release site the bear was still under the influence of the tranquilizer and could barely raise its head, so I figured it was okay to open the trap door. Just as I raised the door, though, the bear lunged forward, hitting me square in the midsection and knocking me flat on my back. The bear rolled over me and ended up with his head resting on my arm. After seeing stars for a few seconds I scrambled to my feet, but the bear didn't move. It was still under the effects of the drug and had only wanted to get out of the trap but I was in the way. I chuckled, thinking that if the Penn State football team needs a guard, I know where they can find one.

—WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGANY

Out of Its League

BERKS — Nowadays deer, geese, turkeys and other wildlife are being seen more often in populated areas. This past summer my family and I saw a red-tailed hawk land on the lights at a Reading Phillies game. Wild birds and animals are very adaptable, so you never know just where they might pop up.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, BALLY

Short-Circuited

Mercer County food and cover corps workers Mike Colgan and John Pfaff recently had to spend some time "fishing" a computer, monitor and keyboard from a wetlands on SGL 284. I know from personal experience that sometimes you feel like tossing out the computer, but if you get the urge to do so, please dispose of it properly.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Will be Missed

WASHINGTON — After 42 years of dedicated service, Deputy Mike Vosel recently retired. Mike was a consummate professional and a great partner, and during his career saw many changes in the Game Commission and served with many officers. Thank you, Mike, for your dedicated service. You'll be hard to replace.

— WCO DANIEL T. SITLER, MEADOWLANDS

If She Only Knew

In August our gymnasium at the headquarters building is transformed into a distribution center for antlerless deer license applications. Every afternoon, a UPS truck arrives to pick up shipments at the back door, which looks out on a nature area behind our building. On one afternoon one worker, Tote Gilberthorp, opened the back doors in anticipation of UPS arriving. When she did, a doe was grazing about 50 feet away, seemingly not the least bit concerned about the work being done inside.

— VALERIE KAZAKAVAGE, LICENSE DIVISION CHIEF, HARRISBURG

Trail of "Bread Crumbs"

BERKS — I recently resolved an investigation that involved $5,000 in damages to land farmed by one of our Farm-Game co-operators. The case centered around an individual who, while under the influence and with a suspended drivers license, took out a row of mailboxes and drove his vehicle into a field planted in crops. Armed with tire impressions, vehicle parts and information from interviews, I was able to trace the route and locate the vehicle (still covered with mud). The tread impressions and broken car parts from the scene matched the vehicle, resulting in a confession and successful prosecution. A special thanks to all the folks who helped, particularly Trooper Nick Scianna of the State Police Troop L Forensics Service Unit.

— DEPUTY LARRY GALLAGHER, HAMBURG

Slumber Party

TIOGA — The owners of a home in the Pine Creek Gorge told me their cats sleep outside on their porch each night, and one night a bear joined the felines. The whole group was curled up together on the porch.

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, WELLSBORO



Never Thought About That

BEDFORD — Isn't it ironic that to trap a nuisance bear that has been rummaging through garbage cans a WCO has to first raid a dumpster to find donuts to bait the culvert trap.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, EVERETT



Should Have Been Dentists

FAYETTE — In April 2002 I trapped a 255-pound bear that was raiding a dumpster at a business in my district. While collecting data on the bear, we noticed a broken canine tooth that had become infected, and the infection had spread into the jaw. We treated it as best we could, using alcohol, a medical cement and penicillin. A vet later explained that we should have killed the bear, because the infection would return and the bear would die an agonizing death. I had relocated the bear 30 air miles from its original capture site, and am pleased to say I recaptured it at the same dumpster, now a healthy 420 pounds. The bruin has the healthiest, whitest, teeth of any bear I've ever handled.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, UNIONTOWN

Only Deer

While monitoring deer with telemetry equipment, it's not uncommon for passersby to stop and ask what we're looking for. Many will offer their own assumptions, with bears being the most common guess. One person, though, asked if we were tracking UFOs. Despite my initial surprise, I realized how it must look, seeing someone wearing earphones attached to an electronic device slung over their shoulder and pointing an antenna toward the sky.

— WALTER "DEET" JAMES, PGC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST AIDE

Good Advice

FRANKLIN — Every year there are hunter related shooting incidents (HRSI) that are not reported to the Game Commission for several days or even weeks after the incident occurred. By law, all HRSIs must be reported within 72 hours, but we ask that you contact your region office immediately, even before you leave the field if possible. A good rule of thumb is that if someone is injured by a firearm or bow and arrow while hunting, contact emergency personnel first and then the PGC.

— WCO TRAVIS PUGH, GREENCASTLE



No Lack of Conversation

INDIANA — The steamy hot weather we had during the summer was a topic of discussion while prospective deputy Craig Edwards and I were relocating a nuisance bear. The topic of discussion on the trip home, however, was the large timber rattlesnake that Craig practically stepped on when we got out of the vehicle to release the bear.

— WCO PATRICK L. SNICKLES, MARION CENTER

Bumper Crops

ARMSTRONG — The acorn crop appears to be more plentiful here than the last couple of years. The wild cherries are abundant and many of the apple trees are loaded with fruit. Nature's "table" is certainly set for our wildlife this fall.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON

Exploding Situation

LUZERNE — WCO Mark Rutkowski and I were preparing to process a bear for PSP Troop N, Camp Cadet. Just as Mark was tranquilizing the animal, the prison C.E.R.T. (Cell Extraction Response Team) unit was just over the hill giving a demonstration on controlling riots. Mark reached in the culvert trap to touch the bear, to see if there was any reaction, when the C.E.R.T. team touched off a large flash bang. When Mark's feet finally came back to the ground the only thing he could say was, "Wow, I thought I blew up the bear!"

— WCO DAVID P. ALLEN, MOUNTAINTOP

One Out of Four

SULLIVAN — WCOs are often mistaken for officers in other professions. As I stood outside a Ricketts Glen State Park building, waiting to do a program about bears, visitors asked me about the availability of campsites, where to go hiking, if I had any park maps and to identify a tree. I identified the tree.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Ray of Hope

In spite of the reduction in the number of pheasants stocked for this hunting season, there has been a small silver lining to this dark cloud. Last March, in preparation for the decrease in production at our game farms, Fayette and Somerset counties received more than 900 hen pheasants for release. These birds were in great shape, had not started egg production, and were stocked in our best habitat. This stocking has resulted in some of the best natural reproduction we have seen in years. As the Food and Cover crews worked in these areas, young birds were seen on a regular basis throughout the spring and into the fall. It's very important this hunting season that hunters identify their targets and not mistakenly shoot any hens. If we're careful, we might have more wild birds in these areas.

— LMO SCOTT W. TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN

Take Note

GREENE — During last year's firearms deer season the most common violation was hunters within safety zones. With a new season upon us, it's important to remember that it is unlawful, without permission, to hunt within 150 yards (50 yards for bowhunters) of occupied buildings. Buildings include barns, garages and playgrounds, and safety zones extend across property lines, even into state game lands. The only time it is lawful to hunt in a safety zone is when you have prior permission from the occupants.

— WCO RANDY CRAGO, CARMICHAELS

Now, Be Nice

MERCER — One Saturday afternoon I was called to the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center to help the staff with a potentially dangerous situation. A large tree had snapped off in the high winds and was leaning over the nature trail supported primarily by the branches of another tree. I used yellow caution tape to close off that section of trail and was advising visitors walking down that they couldn't continue. As I described the hazardous situation to several families, I commented that these "leaners" are often referred to as "widow makers." The ladies in the group then asked if they could pay me to take their husbands down the trail.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Bad Business

ARMSTRONG — The illegal operation of ATVs seems rampant everywhere, but recently I saw one of the most glaring examples. I was patrolling near a remote field of [formerly] standing corn when I saw where someone had ridden a 4-wheeler back and forth through the corn, flattening the stalks. It's hard enough for a farmer to deal with the costs of lime, fertilizer, fuel, equipment breakdown and unfavorable weather, without having to deal with this criminal activity.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, RURAL VALLEY



Ruined the Moment

SUSQUEHANNA — Master Beekeeper Gerry Ely was showing Deputy Executive Director Mike Schmit and me his beehives, when Mike questioned him about the sweet aroma that hung in the air. Gerry explained that it was from the recent goldenrod bloom, but mentioned that in a week or two it would be so strong that it would smell like wet feet. Mike and I thanked Gerry for the quick lesson in beekeeping. For me, though, the taste of honey will never be the same.

— WCO VICTOR ROSA, FLEETVILLE

Mixed Up?

WAYNE — Recently, I stopped my truck to let some turkeys cross the road. I had to look twice when the last turkey in line turned out to be a peacock.

— WCO JAMES P. MCCARTHY, WAYMART

Batgirl?

Many people fear and loathe bats, but they are one of our most misunderstood and under appreciated animals. When doing business at the drive-thru window at my bank, I mentioned that there was a bat perched on the exterior brick wall directly over the teller's window. Instead of getting a fearful reaction, I was pleasantly surprised to hear the teller exclaim that the bat was good at taking care of the insects flying around her window and was welcome to stay right there.

—LMO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Hunters headed out-of-state: Be Advised

WITH chronic wasting disease (CWD) present in free-ranging and captive wildlife populations in 14 states and two Canadian provinces, including our neighboring states of New York and West Virginia, new regulations have been enacted that limit what hunters may bring back to Pennsylvania from those CWD-affected areas.

In September, the state Department of Agriculture issued an order to ban the importation of specific carcass parts from states and Canadian provinces where CWD has been found in free-ranging cervid populations. States named in the order are: Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming; as well as the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

From West Virginia, parts are banned only from Hampshire County, where four wild deer have tested positive for CWD.

PGC Executive Director Vern Ross noted that because New York officials have imposed a ban on the removal of specific carcass parts from a specified containment area in New York, the Empire State was not included on the bans, which took effect Oct. 1.

At its October meeting, the Pennsylvania Game Commission passed a similar importation ban.

Specific carcass parts — where the CWD prion (causative substance) concentrates in cervids — prohibited from being brought back to Pennsylvania are: head (including brain, tonsils, eyes and retropharyngeal lymph nodes); spinal cord/backbone; spleen; skull plate with attached antlers, if visible brain or spinal cord material is present; cape, if visible brain or spinal cord material is present; upper canine teeth, if root structure or other soft material is present; any object or ar-

Hunters heading to an area with a history of CWD should become familiar with that area's regulations and guidelines for the transportation of harvested game animals. Hunters in areas where CWD is known to exist should also follow these recommendations:

- Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that appears sick; contact the state wildlife agency if you see or harvest an animal that appears sick.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when field-dressing carcasses.
- Bone out the meat from your animal.
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field-dressing is completed.
- Request that your animal be processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal, or process your own meat, before bringing it back to Pennsylvania.
- Have your animal processed in the endemic area of the state where it was harvested, so that high-risk body parts can be properly disposed of there.
- Don't consume the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils or lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field-dressing, coupled with boning out a carcass, will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)
- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.

ticle containing visible brain or spinal cord material; unfinished taxidermy mounts; and brain-tanned hides.

The order does not limit the importation of: meat, without the backbone; skull plate with attached antlers, if no visible brain or spinal cord material is present; tanned hide or raw hide with no visible brain or spinal cord material present; cape, if no visible brain or spinal cord material is present; upper canine teeth, if no root structure or other soft material is present; and finished taxidermy mounts.

In other CWD-related action, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture implemented a mandatory surveillance monitoring program for captive cervids beginning Oct. 1.

As of January, Pennsylvania had 687 deer propagators, 24 elk propagators, and 55 with both deer and elk. Pennsylvania ranks as one of the top states in deer propagators.

The Game Commission, with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, has conducted tests on 162 elk and 6,259 deer killed by hunters in Pennsylvania over the past four and three years, respectively. Since 1998, more than 350 deer that died of unknown illness or were exhibiting abnormal behavior also were tested. No evidence of CWD has been found in any of these samples.

The Game Commission will continue to monitor for and collect samples from deer and elk that appear sick or behave abnormally, and, this year, the agency plans to test all hunter-killed elk and 4,000 hunter-harvested wild deer for the disease.

A task force comprised of representatives from the Governor's Office, the Game Commission, the state departments of Agriculture, Health and Environmental Protection, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency has developed a CWD response plan. It can be viewed on the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) by clicking on "Reports/Minutes" and then selecting "Pennsylvania CWD Response Plan."

Additional information on CWD can be found on the CWD Alliance's website, www.cwd-info.org.

Taking and reporting collared and instrumented deer

OVER the past five years, Game Commission biologists have captured and marked nearly 2,500 white-tailed deer. Captured deer are marked with plastic ear tags and many have radio collars.

"We ask hunters to treat deer with radio collars and/or ear tags just like any other deer," said Dr. Christopher Rosenberry, Deer Management Section supervisor. "If the deer is legal for harvest, and a hunter wishes to take it, he or she should. What's important is that the hunter who does so goes on to report the ear-tagged or radio-collared deer. Further, changes have occurred in the reporting process for these marked deer."

Due to budget constraints, the toll-free numbers on the ear tags and radio collars were discontinued. Instead of using the toll-free numbers, hunters are urged to use one of the following alternatives:

• Call toll-free 877-PSU-DOES, or any of the following toll-numbers: PGC Northcentral Region, 570-398-4744; PGC Southcentral Region, 814-

643-1831; PGC Southwest Region, 724-238-9523; or PGC Bureau of Wildlife Management 717-787-5529.

• Report online at the PGC's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

• Send a letter or post card, include the ear-tag number; county/township/WMU where it was taken; as well as your name, address and telephone number. Mail it to Deer Management Program, Bureau of Wildlife Management, Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Not just those who take collared or tagged deer should report their harvests. If all hunters reported every deer they harvest, as required by law, harvest estimates wouldn't be needed. Last year, reporting rates for both antlerless and antlered deer dropped to 40 percent, the lowest level ever. The dropping compliance by hunters to report their harvests is concerning, because it decreases the precision of the agency's harvest estimate.

Each year, about 75 deer-aging personnel check and record information from ear tags on deer at meat processors. Last year more than 34,000 deer were examined. The information collected was then cross-checked with harvest report cards submitted by hunters, to establish reporting rates for antlered and antlerless deer by WMU.

"Nearly 170,000 report cards were received," noted PGC Bureau of Wildlife Management Director Cal DuBrock. "That we continue to receive such a significant number of report cards indicates many hunters are honoring their obligation to report their deer. But when you consider more than 400,000 deer were taken last year, it's obvious that we can — and must — do better."

PGC pays $1.7 million to local governments

FOR 2005, the Game Commission paid $1,713,864.55 as in-lieu-of-tax payments for State Game Lands it owns in 65 of the state's 67 counties.

"Since 1929, the Game Commission has made in-lieu-of-tax payments to local governments to offset the loss of potential property tax revenues," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "However, State Game Lands do not draw on municipal services. In fact, because State Game Lands attract hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts, they're economic assets to local communities without associated costs for municipal services such as schools, water or sewer services, public maintenance or police protection."

The Game Commission began buying State Game Lands in 1920, and in 1929 the General Assembly set the Game Commission's in-lieu-of-tax payments at five cents per acre. In 1963, the rate was increased to 20 cents; in 1980, 39 cents; in 1984, 60 cents; and in 1995 to the present rate of $1.20. This $1.20 is evenly divided among the county, school district and municipal governments based on the State Game Lands acreage within each political subdivision. For a county listing of State Game Lands acreage and in-lieu-of-tax amounts paid, visit www.pgc. state.pa.us.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News;* the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Barn owls in the southeast or southcentral?

PGC officials are seeking information on barn owls in the southeast and southcentral regions, in an effort to preserve and enhance barn owl numbers there. Barn owls have been declining for several decades, but through the Game Commission's new Barn Owl Conservation Initiative, researchers are compiling information on where barn owls are currently found or may be found.

"Our objective is to focus on habitat issues by assessing the foraging, nesting and roosting habitats where barn owls exist or are known to have existed," states Jamie Zambo, Game Commission Southeast Region Wildlife Diversity Biologist.

After initial data is compiled, biologists will determine where conservation efforts, such as the erection of nest boxes, should be directed.

About 10-15 inches tall and with wingspans of 41-47 inches, barn owls are best known by their distinctive, long heart-shape face, which has given rise to another name for this species, the "monkey-faced owl."

Barn owls are found near agricultural fields, grasslands and other open areas. They may nest in tree cavities, but more often in barns, silos and man-made nest boxes. Because barn owls feed primarily on rodents, they are beneficial to farmers.

If you know of any barn owls in the southeast, contact biologist Jamie Zambo at 610-926-3136; or in the Southcentral, call biologist Dan Mummert at 814-643-1831.

Deer and osprey cases solved

FOR AN ACT one Game Commission official called "something no one with a conscience could endorse," Marshall C. Mixell, 30, from McSherrystown pled guilty to unlawful taking and possession of a white-tailed deer. The case was brought before District Judge Daniel Bowman, Bonneauville, and Mixell, who pled guilty, was fined $800 and is subject to loss of hunting privileges for at least one year. Specifically, Mixell used an ATV to chase a deer to the point of exhaustion and then killed it. Adams County WCO Darren J. David filed the charges.

WCO David was notified by the county dispatch center when a citizen reported that a dead deer was being transported on an ATV through a farmer's field. The defendant, Mixell, was located with the deer at a friend's home. He claimed the deer was found after it injured itself crossing a fence and that he killed it in an act of mercy and removed it out of courtesy to the landowner. According to WCO David, however, Mixell's story didn't add up.

Backtracking the tire marks left by an ATV from the acquaintance's home to a neighboring farm, David was able to determine that Mixell first encountered the deer in open fields and gave chase with his vehicle. By the time the deer had tried to escape over a nearby fence, it was apparently too exhausted to leap the fence that, according to David, was only about two feet high.

Mixell then went back to the friend's house to obtain a knife, then returned and approached the deer to

stab it to death before taking it to the house.

WCO David said that high temperatures were probably a contributing factor to the deer's death.

"Most know how hard winter is on wildlife, but heat-induced stress can be just as deadly," David said. "With the hot and humid weather we were experiencing, it wouldn't take much to chase a deer with a vehicle to the point where it could no longer negotiate minor obstacles."

In a separate case, Game Commission officials arrested Jason Horton, 20, for shooting at or interfering with an active osprey nest. Horton also faces criminal charges for the unlawful possession of a firearm, selling or transferring a firearm to a minor, burglary, criminal trespass and criminal conspiracy. He was arraigned before District Judge Richard Claypool, Pocono Pines.

Charges against three juveniles who were with Horton were pending at press time.

The incident occurred on July 31, in the Forest Glen Development of Pocono Pines. A witness — who is an avid hunter — called the Game Commission Northeast Region after observing four individuals shoot at or into an active osprey nest, with what he described as a high-powered rifle. At the time of the shooting the nest contained two adult birds and two fledglings.

"The caller provided accurate information on the vehicle and its license plate, along with a good description of the four individuals involved," stated Monroe County WCO Pete Sussenbach. "Without this information, this violation most likely would have gone unsolved."

Arriving at the nest site, WCO Sussenbach found spent cartridge cases from two separate firearms. Fortunately, no osprey was found dead or injured, however the birds where nowhere to be found.

While WCO Sussenbach was conducting his search, Game Commission Dispatcher Diane Grimes learned that the vehicle's owner was a New Jersey resident who also had a residence in the Pocono Pines community.

WCO Sussenbach, with officers from Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department, went to the residence and found one of the suspects. The individual, a 17-year-old, confessed to firing several shots into the osprey nest. He also named the other individuals, including Horton, who, when interviewed, also admitted to firing at or into the nest. The two other suspects, both juveniles, were located, and gave full confessions to their role in the shooting. Officers secured two firearms believed used in the violation.

As the investigation began to unfold, it was determined that both fire-

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals.** All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

arms had been stolen from a local residence a week earlier. Evidence gathered by Pocono Mountain Police Detective Steven Mertz from this and several other home burglaries in the immediate area indicate a connection with some of these individuals.

"Fortunately, none of the birds was killed or injured," stated WCO Sussenbach. "They all returned to the nest area within a few days of the incident."

Bear Check Stations — November 21-23

Note new, shorter hours: Statewide, Mon. Nov. 21 and Tues. Nov. 22, Noon to 8 p.m.; Wed. Nov. 23, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

IMMEDIATELY upon taking a bear, before it is moved, hunters must complete all information on the tag and attach it to the bear's head (ear). Then, within 24 hours, they must take the bear, along with their hunting license and bear license, to one of the following check stations:

Northwest Region:

Forest County
Marienville Volunteer Fire Co.
106 N. Forest St., Marienville
(one block west of Route 66)

Jefferson County
SGL 244, south from Exit 86, I-80 and just off Route 205, Reynoldsville

Venango County
Northwest Region Office
1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin

Warren County
SGL 309, Route 127
(2 miles south of Tidioute)

Southwest Region:

Fayette County
Laurel Ridge State Park
Route 653, 6 miles east of Normalville; 7 miles west of New Lexington

Indiana County
Yellow Creek State Park
Off Route 422, Indiana

Westmoreland County
Southwest Region Office
Route 711, 7 miles north of Ligonier

Northcentral Region:

Centre County
Penn Nursery
Route 322 near Potters Mills

Clearfield County
PGC maintenance building along the Quehanna Highway, about 3.5 miles south of the intersection with Wycoff Run Road about 4.5 miles north of Karthaus **(new location)**
S.B. Elliott State Park
Rt. 153 north of I-80, Exit 111

Clinton County
Chapman Twp. Fire Company
Four miles south of Renovo on Route 120 in North Bend

Lycoming County
Antes Fort Fire Hall
Quarter-mile south of NC Region Office on Route 44, and at Trout Run Fire Hall, Route 14

McKean County
SGL 62 Bldg., 3 miles north of Mt. Jewett on Ornsby Road

Tioga County
SGL 208 Bldg., 3 miles north of Gaines on Route 349

Union County
Bald Eagle SF Hdqs., Route 45 just west of Route 235

Southcentral Region:

Fulton County
Buchanan SF Bldg., 4 miles east of Breezewood, north of Rt. 30
Huntingdon County
Southcentral Region Office Route 22, 1.1 miles west of Huntingdon

Northeast Region:

Bradford County
Monroeton Rod and Gun Club Rt. 220 on Twp. Rd. 402 between Monroeton and New Albany
Carbon County
Beltzville State Park Main. Bldg., 2950 Pohopoco Dr., just east of Exit 74 PA Turnpike NE Ext. (I-476)
Lackawanna County (new location)
Lackawanna State Park Maintenance Bldg. behind park office on Route 524; from I-81 take Exit 199 and go 3 miles west on 524
Luzerne County
Northeast Region Office Intersection of routes 415 and 118 Dallas
Monroe County
SGL 127 Bldg., Route 423, 2 miles south of Tobyhanna
Pike County
SGL 180 Shohola Bldg., Route 6 at Shohola Falls, 13 miles south of Hawley
Sullivan County
State Forestry Bldg., Route 87, 1.5 miles south of Hillsgrove

Southeast Region:

Berks County
Southeast Region Office, 448 Snyder Road, 7 miles north of Reading
Dauphin County
PGC Headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg
Schuylkill County (new station)
Tuscarora State Park Maintenance Bldg., Barnesville Route 54, 2 miles west of Tamaqua

Nov. 28-Dec. 3

WMUs 3B, 3C,3D, 4C, 4E & Rockview Prison

Mon., Tues. & Sat., noon - 8 p.m.

Carbon County *
Beltzville State Park Main. Bldg.
Monroe County *
SGL 127 Bldg., Route 423, Tobyhanna
Pike County *
SGL 180 Shohola Bldg.
Lackawanna County *
Lackawanna State Park
Schuylkill County *
Tuscarora State Park
Sullivan County *
State Forestry Bldg., Hillsgrove

Mon. - Sat. 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Southeast Region Office
448 Snyder Road, 7 miles north of Reading
Northeast Region Office
Int. of routes 415 & 118, Dallas

Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Southcentral Region Office
Rt. 22, 1.1 miles west of Huntingdon
Northcentral Region Office
Rt. 44 south of Jersey Shore
Northwest Region Office
1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin
Southwest Region Office
Rt. 711, 7 miles north of Ligonier

Hunters with bears to be checked after check station closing hours on November 23 and December 3 should contact the appropriate region office.

***For directions, statewide check station listing preceding page**

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Iowa

More than 140,000 hunters harvested 1.08 million pheasants in 2003, an increase of 48 percent from the 729,000 taken in 2002. Nearly 25,000 hunters harvested more than 114,000 quail in 2003 — a 79 percent increase from the prior year.

Pennsylvania

Sharpshooters in the Gettysburg National Military Park have killed more than 1,800 deer since 1995 to control the population. The meat is donated to food banks.

Hunting Alive & Well

Responsive Management research indicates that 67 percent of Americans approve of hunting, even though only 7 percent of Americans hunt each year. Thirty-five percent of Americans 18 years old and older strongly approve of hunting, while 32 percent moderately approve. Eight percent either didn't know or were neutral about hunting. Ten percent moderately disapprove of hunting, while 14 percent strongly disapprove. In general, nearly 7 out of 10 Americans approve of hunting, while fewer than 3 out of 10 disapprove.

New York

In 2003-04, approximately 34,000 hunters harvested about 141,225 ruffed grouse.

North Dakota

Nearly 7,500 squirrels were taken by about 1,700 hunters in 2004. The harvest was down 25 percent and the number of hunters down 23 percent from 2003.

Top Five Duck Hunting States

Based on the 2003-04 season, the top states for duck harvest were: Louisiana, 1.3 million; Arkansas, 1.1 million; California, 1 million; Minnesota, 885,000; and Texas, 816,000. Tops for duck harvest per hunter were: California 23; Utah, 20; Louisiana, 20; Mississippi, 19; and Oklahoma, 16.

Deer/Vehicle Collisions

According to a study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, cars and motorcycles crash into deer more than 4,000 times a day, and in 2003, a record 210 people were killed in collisions with animals, mostly deer. Texas ranked first with 20, and Pennsylvania ranked second with 16, fatalities in 2003. Deer are involved in about 75 percent of fatal animal-crash accidents. In all, there were 1.5 million deer crashes in 2003, injuring 13,713 people and causing $1.1 billion in vehicle damage. The study found most animal crashes involved one vehicle, and deaths were usually caused when the vehicle left the road or a motorcyclist fell off the bike. Such animal-involved fatal crashes have been rising since the mid-1990s. Between 1993 and 1997, an average of 119 fatal crashes occurred each year. Between 1998 and 2002, the figure rose to 155.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

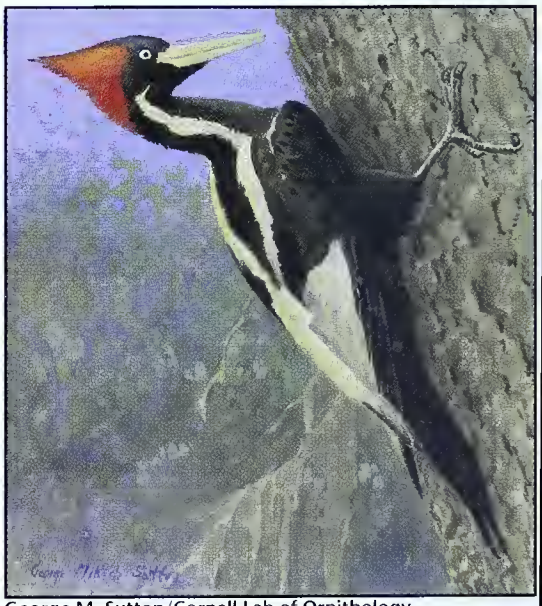
Return of the Ivory-Billed & Other Critters

LAST SPRING, an e-mail came into my computer that hinted at a miracle. The message from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was tantalizing. It began: "MEDIA ADVISORY — Major Announcement and Press Conference — Interior Secretary Gale Norton, Scientists, Partners to Announce Dramatic Rediscovery of a Species Previously Believed to be Extinct." The date of the press conference was April 28, 2005; the time 11:30 a.m. As a member of the press, I was invited to listen in.

Unfortunately, due to other commitments I wasn't able to hear the momentous announcement live. But I already knew what it had to be. As much as we may say we value all wildlife, I doubt that even the USFWS would have made such a splash for a minnow. No, this had to be something of the type that a biologist once described as "charismatic mega-fauna." Something large and pretty. Something like the ivory-billed woodpecker.

Most who try to stay informed about wildlife, including birds, and their conservation challenges have encountered some of the story of the ivory-billed woodpecker and its purported demise. At 20 inches long, the big ivory-bill once ranged across the South's mature bottomland forests, feeding on beetle grubs in standing dead trees. The wholesale cutting of the old-growth swamp forests, accompanied by indiscriminate shooting and collecting, including by ornithologists, led to the belief that the ivory-bills died out as a species in the 1940s. The last time one was seen, before the recent rediscovery, was before the felling of the Singer Tract, in Louisiana, which was one of the last strongholds of the ivory-bill.

After that, scientists assumed the bird was gone. We've all been cautioned about that word, and the assumption was proved wrong. In the decades following the last verified sighting, occasional reports of ivory-bills came from laymen — fishermen, hunters and trappers mostly — as well as ornithologists. All were either dismissed outright by professionals and academia or were followed up with visits that failed to confirm the ini-



George M. Sutton/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

A PAINTING of an ivory-billed woodpecker. The rediscovery of the ivory-billed begs the question, "What else is out there?"

tial sightings.

That is, until last year, when Tim Gallagher, editor of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's "Living Bird" magazine, went on the trail of these ivory-bill reports. He followed up not only ornithologists' but also sportsmen's reported encounters, at last seeing an ivory-billed woodpecker himself. From there, university personnel and others became involved, also saw or heard the bird, and the existence of the ivory-bill was established in the Big Woods area of Arkansas, on the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. Additional conservation plans for the region and protection for this very-much-alive, but rare, bird are underway.



Bob Steiner

BULL MOOSE in velvet, but this isn't the young bull that entered Pennsylvania from New York several years ago. Moose were extirpated in PA, but will they return someday?

After the USFWS announcement, I read Gallagher's book about the rediscovery, *The Grail Bird*, and had the privilege of hearing him speak at a national outdoor writers' meeting. I never expect to see a live, wild ivory-bill, but as he talked I could imagine one, having had many encounters with its smaller cousin (15 inches long), the pileated, here in Pennsylvania. Indeed, researchers quizzed those who said they had seen the ivory-bill as to whether what they saw could have been a pileated. The difference, as Gallagher reports Southerners saying, is that the pileated was called the "Good God" bird, while the ivory-bill was the "Lord God" bird, as in "Lord God, what a bird!"

The rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker begs the question, "What else is out there that we don't know about?" Are there other animals that we think went extinct, but that are still hanging on in out-of-the-way places and may someday be seen, and the observer believed?

That last question is worth looking at in two parts: Whether there are survivors of believed-extinct, or believed-extirpated, wildlife yet around, and if they are seen, would the sighting be given credibility.

As to the first, anything is possible, but in descending order of probability. Don't expect to see a passenger pigeon any time soon. That bird's communal nesting and flocking habits would have made it too visible to miss all these years. But what about wildlife that shouldn't be somewhere, but may be there anyway?

In that category falls something like cougars in Pennsylvania. Are there any; were there any here recently; and if so, were these escaped/released from captivity or were they part of a breeding population? No definite answer has yet been found, as the mountain lions that have been confirmed were traced to a domesticated or wild-animal farm source. It's unlikely the state has truly wild cougars. I've both heard from a reliable source who said he had seen one while deer hunting (not far from where an escaped cat was found) and watched a video tape of a supposed cougar.

In the latter case, although I believe the person who brought me the tape honestly thought the animal was a mountain lion, on the film the cat moving through the shadows did not have the body dimensions or the heavy-weighted walk a cougar should have. At least it didn't move like the ones I've seen in zoos or in TV shows and movies. Maybe it was just a big house cat seen in a situation that was tricky as to distance and proportions. But then, I wasn't

For more on the rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker, read *The Grail Bird,* by Tim Gallagher, Houghton Mifflin Co., 215 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10003. Also visit the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's website www.cornell.edu or the Nature Conservancy's, www.nature.org.

there.

Just how reliable are observations, especially at a distance and without the aid of binoculars or scopes? How much of what we see does the mind conjure from what the eye records? Do we fill in the blanks unconsciously? I'm sure we try not to, but anyone who has talked to eyewitnesses after a vehicle accident knows how wide-ranging truthful reports of the occurrence can be.

That's not to say that observers, even amateur ones, should be automatically disbelieved when an odd wild animal appears. Take the coyote, for instance. Decades ago hunters were reporting something wild and canine in Pennsylvania. Coyotes? Nah, couldn't have been! Wild dogs or run-loose German-shepherd-like farm dogs? Maybe. Now we know these sightings were likely coyotes from an emergent population that had entered the state, probably from several directions. Today the animal is an established part of Pennsylvania's fauna.

I wonder what the first person to see the moose that wandered into the northeast corner of the state several years ago must have thought. "Wha-a-a? A moose? A MOOSE!" And then, "Do I tell anybody? Will anyone believe me?" Perhaps he wondered if a moose was what he truly saw — maybe it was a dark-colored cow that got out of a pasture. Did that person fear he would be laughed at if he told, that he would be lumped with those who claim to have seen sasquatches and ovoid-headed aliens?

But a moose did wander into Pennsylvania. And the ivory-billed woodpecker still exists. Yet at one time, for an ornithologist to claim to have seen an ivory-bill, without irrefutable photographic or recorded proof, it could have cost him or her their career. In his book, Gallagher relates how one local outdoorsman who repeatedly saw the bird said he thought about shooting it, to prove once and for all that it existed. Just as quickly, though, he dismissed that as counterproductive. His frustration at not being believed is understandable.

Sportsmen may be better observers of the outdoors than most people. After all, we train ourselves to see accurately; it's necessary to our sport. Is that a buck behind that blowdown? Is that a squirrel out on that limb? What kind of duck is flying by? Is that flushed pheasant a hen or rooster? We look for distinctive characteristics or field marks, just as those who rediscovered the ivory-bill watched carefully for the white edge on both the front and back of the outspread wings.

The question of whether an unlooked-for animal still exists wouldn't be possible at all if its habitat wasn't there. The presence of wildlife always comes back to that. In his program at the writers' conference, Gallagher showed a slide of what the locale of the former magnificently forested Singer tract looks like today. Immense, flat, flooded fields have replaced this former woodland jewel of the South. But other areas, including the Arkansas wildlife refuge where the ivory-bill was re-found, are growing back to forests of the age the bird needs. The current challenge is protection of these stands and conservation of additional habitat across the agriculturally active and urbanizing region.

We may not have the ivory-billed woodpecker in Penn's Woods, but keeping the familiar wildlife we do have, encouraging rarer ones to become more plentiful, and maybe providing an opportunity for those that seem to be lost to return means saving them a suitable home as woods, wetlands or grasslands. □

Is birdsong all about territory and mate attraction, or do some birds delight in their singing as much as we do?

November Songsters

BY NOVEMBER most birds have stopped singing, but I can depend on our male Carolina wren greeting the dawn with his cheery *tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle* song. Later in the day I often encounter singing white-throated sparrows. Sometimes I hear the *fee-bee* song of black-capped chickadees or a warbling eastern bluebird vocalizing from the electric wire. Foraging American robins occasionally break into song, especially when they are drunk on wild, fermented fruits, and resident song sparrows sing steadily throughout the month.



All of those November songsters brighten what can sometimes be cold, gray days. Yet why do some birds sing all year, while most cease in August or September? By diving into several recently published books on birdsong, I managed to answer specific questions regarding the November songsters and also learn more about *The Singing Life of Birds*, as Donald Kroodsma, one of the best authorities on the biology of birdsong, titled his new book and accompanying compact disc.

Of the 9,000 bird species in the world, more than half (approximately 5,500) belong to the order of Passeriformes, those small land birds with feet that allow them to perch. Passeriformes are further divided into two suborders: the oscines and suboscines. The one thousand suboscines live mostly in the New World tropics, but are represented in North American by tyrant flycatchers. These are birds whose songs are encoded in their genes. Even if they are raised in a soundproof laboratory from the time they hatch and never hear the song of their parents, they will still "know" their species' song. Here on our mountain, suboscines are represented by eastern wood-pewees, great-crested, least and Acadian flycatchers, and eastern phoe-

For your holiday gift lists, I recommend the following books:

The Singing Life of Birds: The Art and Science of Listening to Birdsong by Donald Kroodsma, Houghton Mifflin Company — A delightful account of Kroodsma's work in birdsong, including some of his new discoveries. This includes a marvelous CD that illustrates many of the points he makes about certain species in his text. A book for someone who knows something about birdsong but wants to know more.

Birdsong: A Natural History by Don Stap, Scribner Publishing — This stars Donald Kroodsma as he makes new discoveries about black-capped chickadee and three-wattled bellbird song. It also includes a succinct history of the study of birdsong. This combination of reporting and scientific lore is easy, fun reading. Anyone interested in birds would enjoy this book.

Nature's Music: The Science of Birdsong edited by Peter Marler and Hans Slabbekoorn, Academic Press. This hefty book is only for professionals and very serious bird students. It includes two CDs and covers all aspects of birdsong, with chapters written by ornithologists from around the world. *Brains and Birdsong, Birdsong and Conservation, How Birds Sing and Why It Matters, Singing in the Wild: The Ecology of Birdsong,* and *Vocal Fighting and Flirting: The Functions of Birdsong* are a few examples of the 14 exhaustive chapters in this incredible tome. Still, I spent many happy weeks reading it.

Bird Sounds: How and Why Birds Sing, Call, Chatter, and Screech by Barry Kent MacKay, Stackpole Books, is a general, easy to understand book for someone who is just getting started. The hows and whys of bird vocalization, regional variation and communication among species are covered and it includes lovely color paintings of birds by the author.

Fieldbook of Wild Birds and Their Music by F. Schuyler Mathews, Applewood Books. This gem of a book was published back in 1904, before modern recording equipment. The author tried to put birdsong into our own musical staff. He also fills his book with poetic writing about birdsong and illustrates it with his own paintings. "The Song Sparrow," he writes "is the flower of his family, a musician of exceptional ability, and the possessor of a character remarkable for its cheerfulness under all conditions of weather."

For the novice: *Know Your Bird Sounds Volume 1* by Lang Elliott, Stackpole Books, subtitled *Songs and Calls of Yard, Garden, and City Birds* includes text with accompanying color photos and an audio guide to 35 common birds. Volume 2 is subtitled *Songs and Calls of Birds of the Countryside* and includes a text, colored photos and an audio guide to 35 birds of meadow, woodland, marsh and shore.

Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs of the Eastern Region, Time Warner Books, includes three CDs and a 64-page booklet that explains each song. That's the one I use when I hear a bird I can't identify.

These books are not available from the Game Commission. Order on-line or through your favorite book store.

bes.

Oscines, on the other hand, are songbirds, all 4,500 of them, that learn their songs like children learn language: by listening to their parents and other adult members of their species and by practicing the sounds they hear.

They begin by making soft, rambling sounds early in their lives that scientists call subsong, which Kroodsma compares to a human baby's babbling. Next they shift to songs resembling the adult song, but often with parts missing or out of order, their so-called plastic song. Finally, during song crystallization, they adopt the full adult song.

Most songbirds respond best to song stimuli and can memorize them more easily during the sensitive phase that begins right after fledging and continues a varying amount of time, depending on their species. Most, though, probably learn their songs during the first 140 days of their lives.

Song sparrows and most other songbirds are close-ended learners, meaning that once they learn their species' songs, they stick with them throughout their lives.

Song sparrows and most other songbirds are close-ended learners, meaning that once they learn their species' songs, they stick with them throughout their lives. Open-ended learners, such as European starlings and northern mockingbirds, learn new songs throughout their lives.

Because oscines learn their songs from others, most develop geographic dialects from the adults they settle near after they leave their natal area. So birds in a given area have songs more like each other than like birds that live farther away. A young male song sparrow, for instance, learns his 10 or so songs from an adult male in his breeding location during his hatching summer.

The study of birdsong is a relatively new science, although even back in the third century B.C. Aristotle, in his *Historia Animalium*, recognized that, "In general the birds produce most voice and with most variety, when they are concerned with mating." And in the early 1700s Baron Ferdinand Adam Pernauer, an Austrian naturalist, wrote, "the blackbirds sometimes call each other . . . either for inciting each other to fly, or to warn each other, or as a means of threat."

But it was not until Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, in 1877, that the recording of birdsong made their systematic study possible. The first recorded birdsong was that of a caged Indian shama by an 8-year-old German boy, Ludwig Koch, in 1879, who had received a phonograph from his father. Koch continued recording birdsong until he fled the Nazis in the 1930s and went to Great Britain. There he was able to pursue his recording work and inspire others to take it up as well.

In the meantime, May 1929, ornithologist Arthur Allen at Cornell University, first recorded birds — a rose-breasted grosbeak, house wren and song sparrow — for a movie company, using motion picture film. But this method was too expensive for Allen and his student Peter Paul Kellogg. Then, successful stockbroker Albert A. Brand enrolled as an ornithology student at Cornell and bankrolled the recording of birdsong using a parabolic dish.

After World War II the invention of the tape recorder and the audiospectrograph, or sonograph, revolutionized the study of birdsong in both England and the United States. The audiospectrograph produces detailed images of sound. At first, most of

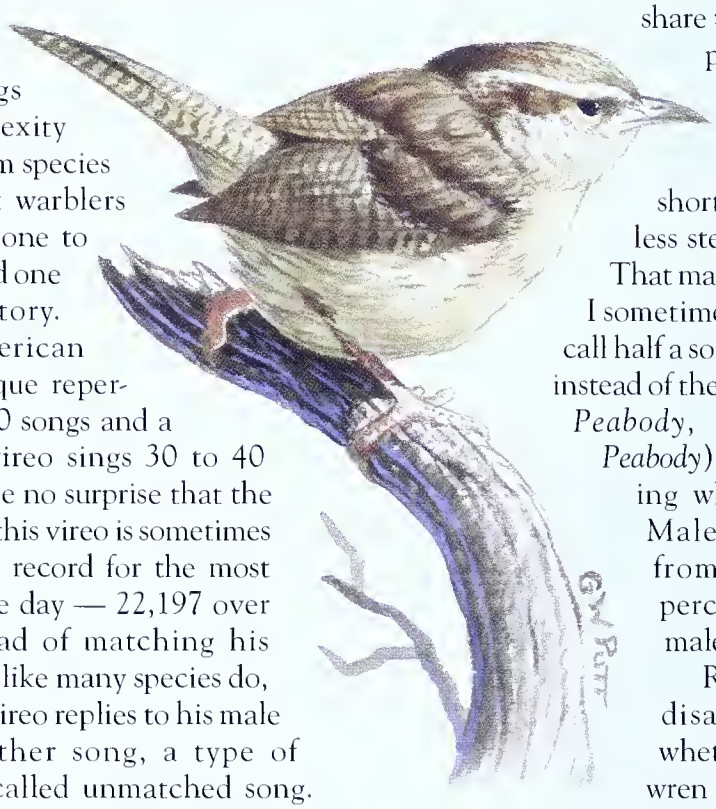
the research was done in laboratories with captive birds. But in the late 1960s, Kroodsma and other ornithologists began studying and recording birdsong in the field.

Today Kroodsma, and most other birdsong scientists, listen to a singing bird, record it in the field using a parabola dish and/or a hand-held microphone to capture the song on tape, and then take it back to their computer, with appropriate software, to create sonograms. The number of songs and their complexity varies greatly from species to species. Most warblers have two songs: one to attract a mate and one to defend territory. Each male American robin has a unique repertoire of up to 100 songs and a male red-eyed vireo sings 30 to 40 songs. It should be no surprise that the Preacher Bird, as this vireo is sometimes called, holds the record for the most songs sung in one day — 22,197 over 14 hours. Instead of matching his neighbor's songs, like many species do, a male red-eyed vireo replies to his male rival with another song, a type of countersinging called unmatched song. Sometimes a red-eyed vireo will mimic other birdsongs, like the one I heard last spring incorporating a least flycatcher's *che-bec* into his own steady stream of all-day song.

A wood thrush sings 20 songs and an eastern meadowlark between 50 and 90. A northern mockingbird has 250 songs and a sedge wren 300 to 400. But those numbers pale in comparison with the champion singer, the brown thrasher, at more than 2,000 songs, a number that Kroodsma — who made that discovery — thinks may be an underestimate.

Some female songbirds also sing. The male northern cardinal, which has 8 to 10 songs, matches songs with other males. The female sings just as well as the male, but matches songs only with her mate (called duetting) so he will bring her food. Common grackle, northern mockingbird, Baltimore oriole and red-winged blackbird females also sing, and so do the females of four of my November songsters — eastern bluebirds, white-throated sparrows, song sparrows and Carolina wrens.

The white-throated sparrow females share the same song patterns as males, but they are often shorter, lower and less steady in pitch. That may explain why I sometimes hear what I call half a song (*Poor Sam*, instead of the full *Poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody*) among singing white-throats. Males also sing from higher perches than females.



Researchers disagree over whether Carolina wren females sing. Thomas M. Haggerty and Eugene S. Morton, who wrote the definitive account on the Carolina wren for *The Birds of North America*, claim "Only male Carolina Wrens sing, unlike other *Thryothorus* [the genus of Carolina wrens] species." Kroodsma, on the other hand, says that the male sings his *tea-kettle* song, which the female answers and overlaps with inborn "strident chatter." Clearly there is some disagreement over what comprises song among researchers.

Kroodsma admires the male Carolina wren's song, calling it "the unmistakable stop-dead-in-your-tracks and listen Carolina wren theme." The male has 17 to 55

songs that he has learned from neighboring males, all of which share almost identical repertoires and respond to each other with identical (matched) songs.

Both sexes sing the eastern bluebirds' "cheer, cheerful charmer" song, although the males sing to defend territory while the female sings only when predators are near and the male is away.

But, with all my research, did I find out why my November songsters were singing? Well, Carolina wrens sing all year to maintain territory and the pair bond and perhaps to attract a new mate if his previous mate disappears, the experts say.

White-throated sparrows use song to defend territory and attract females, but they also use it when defending food sources in the winter. Though researchers know they also sing during fall migration, they are not sure why.

Song sparrows also use song to defend territory and attract females. In addition, their song enables them to inform other song sparrows about who and where they are and that they are not two closely related species — white-crowned or swamp sparrows. If they stay on a territory all year, they sing throughout the fall and winter, as at least one of our resident song sparrows has in recent years.

So singing, even in winter, is all about territory and mate attraction. Or is it? Maybe some birds delight in their singing as much as we do. In the words of Charles Darwin, birds "have strong affections, acute perceptions, and a taste for the beautiful." □

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

And The Correct Answer Is . . .

Unscramble the words from the given clue, and then place the letters above the numbers in the spaces with the corresponding numbers below to finish the statement.

Archery — THINBUWONG

Furs — PINTPARG

First aid kit — VASUVIRL

Hunting behavior — TICHES

Can cause outdoor fatalities — MYHOTRAHIPE

Muzzleloader — TOLLFNICK

Hunting is a ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
1 2 3 4 3 5 6 7 6

and a ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.
2 6 8 1 9 10 8 3 11 3 5 3 12 13

answers on p. 63

Many hunters put a lot of time and effort into selecting a stand site, but when deer change feeding patterns or because of changing agricultural practices or increased hunting pressure, it might be wise to move.

Don't Marry the Spot

I KNOW a fellow who owns several hundred acres, and every year he insists on hunting from the same two treestands. Sometimes he's successful; sometimes he's not. In my opinion, the times he fails to tag a deer are based more on his unwillingness to move than to a lack of deer. My friend is one of those hunters who sticks to a favorite spot simply because "it was good in the past."



A LONE BUCK RUB gets my attention; a line of them may motivate me to move my stand.

Many hunters never seem to pay attention to detail, and they wait until the last minute to select a hunting site. In putting up a treestand, they often pick the most convenient tree rather than evaluating the site for the best spot. Making matters worse, because they went through a great deal of work in putting the stand in place, these hunters are unwilling to move to another site after the season opens. In my opinion, this unwillingness to move is a mistake that keeps the deer tag of many hunters firmly attached to their license.

I have little doubt there are sites that produce deer year after year, but few remain hot throughout the entire 6-week season. There also are stands located near natural bottlenecks, trails, rock walls or benches that may produce deer repeatedly, any time during the season. However, those spots are relatively few in number and, for that reason, they are treasured places by those who know where they are and hunt from them. Everyone has a favorite stand,

but for most of the consistently successful hunters I know, getting a buck with a bow and arrow means being willing to move a stand if, or when, the situation dictates.

A few years ago I thought I had found an ideal location in a small finger of thick cover. About 30 yards below me a creek bisected two hills, and to my right a cornfield ran parallel to the cover. From the tracks and droppings it appeared deer came down the hill on my left, crossed the creek and came uphill past my stand location. Because the corn had been harvested, I could easily spot any deer entering the field to feed. Topping things off, several old apple trees grew in front of my stand, giving me every indication I wouldn't have to wait long before seeing deer.

As it turned out, though, I never got a shot or even an opportunity for one at that spot. Sure, I saw deer, and they came up the hill from the creek bottom as anticipated, but they always passed behind me, never approaching the apple trees as expected. It appeared they were intent on feeding in the cornfield and had a preferred corridor they took to get there. It was evident the deer were feeding on apples, but not until after dark. Stubbornly, I refused to believe a buck wouldn't eventually come to feed on the windfall apples, so I stuck to the spot. As a result, I had an unfilled tag for the first nine days of the season.

Wednesday of the second week was one of those quiet, misty mornings, when hunters expect to see deer, and I wasn't disappointed. About 8:30 I spotted a legal buck walking up the hill from the creek bottom. From the direction he was headed, I expected him to stop in front of one of the apple trees before entering the cornfield. If he did, I would have an easy shot. As luck would have it, though, he ignored the apples and just like the other deer, turned on a path that took him behind me. Disappointed, I could only watch the 8-point feed contentedly in the field, just out of shooting range.

That did it. I was definitely going to move my stand, or at least put up another near where those deer were entering the field. Only now, I was annoyed with myself for waiting so long to do it. I still refused to believe my original location wouldn't ultimately pay off, but I couldn't deny what I was seeing.

Deciding to leave that stand in place just in case, I went back to my truck later that morning and got one of my hang-on stands and my portable climbing ladder. After evaluating the area for a tree that would offer both shooting and concealment, I selected a hemlock growing about 20 yards to the east of where I had noticed the deer entering the field. As a result, two nights later I arrowed a 6-point that took nearly the same route to the field as the others.

If I learned anything from that hunt, it's to be flexible with stand placement. Locating a stand near a well used trail or close to a food source is generally a good idea and one I subscribe to, but other factors come into play that make a stand special.

Before hanging a treestand I scout the area well and look for deer sign. I don't care where I saw deer in late August, or even during the beginning of September. I want to know where the deer are likely to be when bow season opens. Because the rut is still weeks away, I look for the most obvious of deer sign — droppings. If I find deer droppings, I carefully note if they are shiny and fresh or if they are old and dry. Fresh droppings mean deer were recently in the area, and that the location is worthy of further scrutiny.

If the ground is soft, I look for fresh tracks. For example, if there are a lot of adult deer tracks with a few small tracks intermingled with them, then the odds are that they were made by a group of does and fawns, if I encounter a large, lone track, odds are good that it was made by a buck. Tracks can't tell a hunter the sex of the deer, but they can give a hint a buck may be in the area.

Later, as the rut approaches, I often take

time after a morning hunt to do additional scouting. I search for new rubs or scrapes that might have been made in the hours I wasn't hunting. Although I prefer hunting near food sources, I'm willing to move a stand or erect a new one along an old logging road or trail if there is sufficient evidence a buck is around. A newly rubbed tree may tweak my interest, but a line of newly rubbed trees, accompanied by a scrape or two, is enough for me to seriously consider changing positions.





THE AUTHOR isn't hesitant to move his stand if sign indicates the deer are concentrating elsewhere. Lightweight portable hang-on stands are great for changing positions quickly.

The first noticeable buck sign appearing in most areas are rubs. Rubs are important to a hunter, because not only do they betray the presence of a buck, but they also can indicate his preferred travel direction. By noting the side of the tree from which the bark was rubbed, a hunter can usually determine the time of day the buck passed by. If the rub on the tree is facing the food source, it was probably made in the morning after the buck was on his way from his feeding area to his bedding area. If the rub is facing thick cover then I assume it was made in the evening as the buck was walking toward the feeding area.

I may move a stand if I discover another trail littered with fresh droppings and tracks. Setting up a stand near a well-used trail, especially if it leads to a food source, can be a great location, but sometimes other factors come into play, making the stand less effective than originally thought.

In my experience, I've found does and fawns are more likely to use a visible trail than a buck. If I'm seeing deer on a regular basis but not seeing any bucks, I look for less obvious secondary trails that a buck may be using. This is where scouting after morning hunts becomes important. I usually hunt from about a half hour before daylight to about 10 o'clock. Afterwards, I take some time to scout for rubs, scrapes or tracks that might have been made in my absence. If I find anything indicating a buck inhabits the area, and if I don't think my present location will yield a shot, I look for an alternate location to place a stand.

Moving stands around the woods once or twice a season to keep abreast of deer movement may seem like a lot of work to some, but for me it has proved to be a highly effective hunting strategy. However, it by no means is the only reason I may choose to move my hunting location.

For many years archers have had the luxury of hunting relatively undisturbed deer throughout a 6-week season. As a result, they could pattern deer movement throughout the entire season and predict where deer would likely feed on any given night. That changed, however, with the mid-October muzzleloader, youth and senior antlerless deer seasons.

Additional hunters in the woods, even for only a week, puts pressure on deer and makes them much more wary than they

were before the beginning of those early firearms seasons. Once the shooting starts, be prepared to move your stand to thicker cover. At this time of year many gun hunters don't venture into thick cover, because foliage may limit shooting opportunities. Instead, they prefer to wait for deer at field edges, thinking shooting opportunities are more likely. It's a good early season strategy, but once the shooting begins, deer quickly head to thick cover and stay there. Because a bow is a short-range sporting arm, this heavy cover becomes an ideal location to set up a stand.

When the early firearms season was inaugurated, I had no idea how the deer were going to react to the increased hunting pressure. I soon found out. Instead of seeing deer casually walking up the hill toward my stand, I found they appeared much more cautious, often running up the hill before entering the cornfield to feed. Making matters worse, once they were in the field, they appeared jittery. Luckily, it wasn't too far away.

About 10 years ago, the landowner on whose farm I hunt had the top of one hill completely logged off. As a result, the secondary growth now covering the area is a thick, almost impenetrable, jungle of brush and multiflora rose. As a bowhunter I originally avoided it, but the more I scouted the area the more I found it was the place the pressured deer used to hide. Deer droppings were everywhere, but better yet, it was evident from the many rubs on different sizes of saplings that more than one buck called the area home. I didn't get a deer from the spot that year, but I began seeing many more at the new site.

Last season I thought I had a great spot to hunt, and I was almost right. The first two evenings I had deer approach, but before I saw them I heard the familiar snort of an alarmed deer and the sound of them departing. I made the mistake of placing my stand too close to the base of a hill, thinking it was far enough away so as not to be detected by deer coming down the slope. It quickly became apparent, though, that I had placed the stand too low, allowing the wind currents to carry my scent uphill just as the deer were coming down. Placing the stand higher in the tree might have helped, but then the shot angle would have been too steep. I ended up moving the stand to a location about 40 yards away. The plan worked, and although I didn't see a buck from my new location, I did see some does.

Another reason I might move a stand is if the site fails to provide adequate cover. When I first put up my treestands, it's usually the third week of September, about a week before archery season begins. At this time there is plenty of foliage to provide concealment. If I do get a shot, the foliage usually hides any movement drawing my bow. Later, when the leaves begin to drop, I'm as naked as a Thanksgiving turkey. This is not a good situation, because deer quickly detect a hunter silhouetted against the sky. Rather than take the chance of being detected while standing in a leafless tree, I move my stand to a location away from where deer are likely to come. This makes it less likely they will detect my movement when I draw my bow.

Hunting deer with a bow and arrow is like a chess game. Each move is met with a counter move. Fine-tuning my hunting strategy throughout the season takes time and effort, but by reacting quickly to changing deer patterns, I increase my opportunities.

Some seasons I never move a stand, but others I might move my stand two or three times. I put a great deal of effort into selecting the perfect site for each of my stands and I have faith in them. Moving a stand takes time and effort, so I need a good reason to change locations, but when deer change feeding patterns as a result of exhausting a food supply or because of changing agricultural practices or increased hunting pressure, I'm willing to leave the spot. Filling the freezer with venison may depend on it. □

By Jim Romanelli

Although keeping a firearm clean is a good idea, it is possible to overdo it. A good rule of thumb is that cleaning is beneficial only when necessary.

Don't Clean Away That Accuracy

WHEN MY FATHER and Uncle Joe served in the military during WWII they were taught that the number two rule in handling a firearm (safety was number one) was to keep it spotlessly clean. So, as they were instructing me in my younger years about shooting sports, the same lessons were emphasized.

Keeping the exterior of a firearm spotless wasn't at all difficult, but when it came to the inside, especially the barrel, that was not so easy. As the years rolled on, I learned that it's not just in the keeping a barrel clean that helps to maintain its accuracy, but it's how it's cleaned that becomes the real key.

The more I learned about proper maintenance, the more I realized that accuracy can be "cleaned" right out of a barrel. So it should come as no surprise that the main reason for inaccuracy in many used rifles is that they have been over cleaned or, more accurately, improperly cleaned too many times.

My own prime example goes back to 1971 when I bought a brand new Marlin Model 39 Article II commemorative rifle. With nice walnut, a brass crescent butt plate and forend cap, a medallion embedded into the receiver and a 22-inch octagonal barrel, it was a handsome rifle. The metal was nicely polished and blued, the action was smooth as silk and best of all, it was accurate.

Over the next five years it was the only .22 rimfire rifle I had, and between trying different brands of ammunition, plinking and hunting, more than 10,000 rounds went through that barrel. As time went on the accuracy began to deteriorate. At first I couldn't understand why, because after every shooting session the barrel was scrubbed with a 3-piece cleaning rod, with patches and brushes, and liberally oiled.

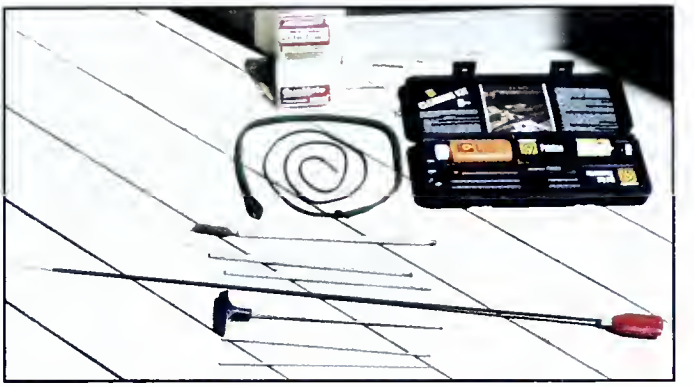
Little did I know then that in my zealous ambition to have it in tip-top shape, I



BLUE WONDER offers a host of gun cleaning and lubricating products.

neglected to pay attention to how that aluminum rod was used. I figured that because aluminum is softer than gun steel, no harm could be done. It ended up that I was half right in that assumption, which also meant that I was half wrong.

What I really succeeded in doing over the years was to bang around that rod enough so that some aluminum was worn off, which then wore the steel inside the barrel in places (not by much) where it affected the ignition of the cartridge as well as the exit of the bullet.



THERE WILL ALWAYS be a debate on what material makes the best cleaning rod. Currently they're made from aluminum, brass, nylon, stainless steel and some are Teflon coated. A BoreSnake will come in handy, and, of course, what would cleaning a firearm be like without the lingering, tantalizing, smell of Hoppes #9 solvent?

I ended up taking the rifle to a gunsmith, and he pulled the barrel, cut the shoulder back, trimmed the breech where the rim was supported and recrowned the muzzle. He also advised me that because the .22 LR ammunition was soft lubricated lead (rather than a copper jacket) there was no reason to clean it anywhere near as often as I did, and when it was time to clean, to not be so generous with a cleaning rod, solvent and oil. His suggestion was to clean the action when dirty and clean the barrel only when accuracy began to deteriorate or before storing the rifle for a long period. When it did become time to reach for a rod, use a bore guide or action sleeve when possible. Run a couple of wet patches through, then three full (back and forth) passes with a bore brush, a couple more wet patches and then a couple of dry ones. His exact words were: "Don't go crazy with the rod, only use a touch of oil on the working parts, the exterior, and if storing it away, a light coating in the barrel, which needs to be removed before shooting again. Remember, "Less is more."

I have followed that advise to the letter, and my Marlin today shoots almost as good as it did when he completed the work more than 30 years — some 50,000 rounds and maybe 10 cleanings ago. No matter whether you're shooting rimfires, hard cast lead or a jacketed bullet, the cleaning process is pretty much the same, except for frequency. Solvent, bristle brush, solvent, and then dry patches is the order it should go.

Soft lead from rimfires is easy to remove, but the hard cast lead and copper jacket deposits take more time and effort. As far as equipment is concerned, all you need is a good cleaning rod, tips and brushes, bore cleaners, solvents, a light preservative oil and cleaning patches. There are also the new generation of BoreSnakes, as well as the electrochemical bore cleaners that do a great job on copper, but because the vast majority of us still use the conventional rod and elbow grease, I'm going to stay within that conventional vein and leave the electrochemical cleaners for another time.

There will always be a debate on what material makes the best cleaning rod. Currently they're made from aluminum, brass, nylon and stainless steel, and some that are Teflon coated. They can be had in one-piece or multi-piece construction. I find that the most popular rods for target shooters and varmint hunters are the one-piece brass, stainless or Teflon coated. Also, there are bore guides and action sleeves that are used in conjunction with the one piece rods for minimum contact with the chamber,



A BORE GUIDE will help in keeping minimal contact with the cleaning rod and the chamber, bore and muzzle.

bore and muzzle. The aluminum multi-piece rods seem to be popular with occasional hunters/shooters, probably because they are fairly inexpensive.

When using the small caliber multi-piece type, always be careful that the patch isn't too tight or the rod may snap at the joint. Then your stuck with a barrel obstruction or the joint may unscrew and the remaining rod will bang against the bore.

The one-piece rods that I prefer are those where the rod spins independent of the handle, so that the patch or bristle brush will follow the path of the rifling. The multi-piece rods come in handy for quick field use with a loose patch.

The tips that hold a cleaning patch are threaded to fit at the end of the rod, and can be of the slotted or jag-type. I avoid the plastic ones, because a tight patch can strip the threads while being pulled out, and then you have a useless tip acting as an obstruction. The jag allows the cleaning patch to contact more surface area of the bore than the slot and should be used when cleaning has begun. It is designed to push out debris and loose fouling that should drop off when exiting the muzzle. (If it doesn't, pull it off so the debris isn't pulled back into the bore.) The slotted tip is designed to work a patch back and forth, and I usually use it after the initial cleaning with a jag.

As far as cleaning patches go, I find that cotton is about the best in absorbency as well as availability. It can be had in packages of different sizes, or cut from tee shirts or flannel shirts.

In the past few years, a new cleaning tool has become popular, Hoppe's "BoreSnake." The BoreSnake is a strong, thin, nylon cord that easily passes down the bore from muzzle or breech, so that it can be grabbed at the other end to be pulled through. A weight is on one end and at the other a bronze brush that scraps loose debris and much of the stubborn fouling, and this is also attached to a thicker piece of nylon that pulls everything out that was cut loose.

Other advantages are that it is washable (put in a pillow case, though, so it doesn't tie up the washer's spindle) and can be used many times, and it's handy enough to keep in a pocket for field use. I find that some target shooters use these cleaners during a match, so that they don't over clean a seasoned barrel.

Also, for firearms that can't be cleaned from the breech (some semiautos and pumps), the BoreSnake can be dropped down through the chamber, and pulled out the muzzle without debris falling into the action. Also, when pulling it through, it doesn't wear on any part of the barrel, as the improper use of a rod might do.

A lot of solvents are out there, and I have yet to try them all, but they can be usually divided into four categories. The first are the light cleaners, which don't attack copper, but will readily wash away loose debris, lubricants and oils on the outside of a firearm and on the inside of the barrel. An example of this would be WD40.

The second category consists of light copper dissolvers that have some ammonia in them and will take care of mild jacket fouling fairly well. Hoppe's No. 9 and Shooter's Choice are examples. When the fouling gets to a point where a mild cleaner takes a long time to get the job done, then the number three category cleaner with a greater amount of ammonia for dissolving jacket material is needed, such as Butches,

Sweets or CR10 bore solvents.

If a barrel consistently fouls excessively then an abrasives type of cleaner is necessary, such as JB Bore Cleaner. This type of cleaner has a mild abrasive that does not bother gun steel, but is murder on copper and other stubborn fouling. It doesn't take long to remove fouling and should be washed out with a mild or light cleaner, so none is left in the bore. It has been found that after several applications of this type of cleaner, barrels will actually foul less because this medium will dull (but not remove) any barrel imperfections and prevent tearing off copper from jackets as they travel down the bore.

I recently talked to some serious target and varmint shooters, as well as bullet and barrel manufactures, to see what their experiences and opinions are in keeping firearms clean and accurate. They all had the same initial comment that bore quality (condition of machine marks and erosion in the bore) was the main factor in the style and amount of cleaning necessary. Another comment was to not clean a barrel until accuracy begins to drop off, whether it be for rimfire or centerfire.

Now those two statements mean more to the target and benchrest shooters and varmint hunters than they do to the casual hunter or plinker. The first two groups expect and demand less than a half MOA from their firearms, and they are such disciplined shooters that it's easy for them to tell when accuracy starts to slip, as their groups begin to open up even by just 1/4 of an inch. For most hunters and plinkers, though, anything that shoots from one to maybe up to three inches is plenty good enough for hunting and bouncing around tin cans.

Fun Game answers:

bowhunting, trapping, survival, ethics, hypothermia, flintlock;

PRIVILEGE, RESPONSIBILITY

Here are just a few examples as to the style and frequency of how different shooters maintain their firearms. A friend of mine who is a small bore target shooter will clean his firearm approximately every 6,000 rounds, and he just uses a couple wet patches soaked in Hoppe's Bench Rest, along with a few dry ones, and then shoots about 100 rounds to re-season the barrel, before competing.

Two of my fellow varmint hunters clean their .223 and .22-250 every 20-30 rounds if using copper jacketed bullets, or every 60-70 if shooting moly bullets. Then they use JB for a dozen strokes, follow it with Butches or Hoppe's No. 9, a couple of dry patches, and if continuing the shooting session they then fire a couple of rounds to condition the barrel. About the only time they clean down to bare steel is if the firearm will be stored away for more than six months or if they're in high humid areas (because moisture can get under copper or moly and deteriorate steel).

I had an uncle who hunted only with a Model 99 .300 Savage, and prior to each season he would put a wet patch and then a dry patch through it, then he would fire one or two rounds for sighting in and use a third to harvest a deer. I once asked him if I could give it a really good cleaning. His reply was, "What for?" Which really meant, "I just cleaned it; it hits where I'm aiming, so leave it alone."

The Marine Corps rifle team uses BoreSnakes exclusively, by dipping the bristle part of the snake in Shooter's Choice solvent and pulling it through several times (maybe pulling a dry patch through if storing it away), and that's it. To those top shooters, clean means only clean enough to maintain predictable accuracy, not a mirror, spotless, barrel.

So as you can see, there is no one way to clean a firearm, but cleaning is important, because an exceedingly fouled barrel will also deteriorate accuracy. Just remember, it's only beneficial when necessary, and try not to over do it. □

The Clearing

THE WEATHERMAN promised a daylong rain, but undeterred by a few raindrops I set out for a day of bowhunting anyway. A colorful autumn has surged to this point in November. With leaf fall almost complete, the muscle of the land is revealed; glossy-coated bucks giving chase to does, bears piling on fat, turkeys gleaning the leaf litter, gray squirrels skittering through the canopy along grapevine tightropes. I move slowly, eyes always searching, and every swaying fern, shift of shadow, drifting leaf is noted. But rain was forewarned and now the drizzle gains muscle.

I work my way down the slope and take shelter under a big rock ledge just as the rain intensifies. I have waited out storms here before, and I am sure that hunters of old had done the same in this very spot. The rocky overhang is the size of a porch awning and I sit on a stack of stones, surrounded on three sides by silvery walls of rain falling straight down, water running in steady streams from the decorative fringe of ferns hanging over the edge of the rock.



First things first, and that means a brunch of bread and butter pickles and a thick meatloaf sandwich. Why save dessert for later? The gob (western Pennsylvanian for whoopie pie) is washed down with hot coffee. Since last year a towering oak has fallen, opening up a small clearing just below, offering an unobstructed view.

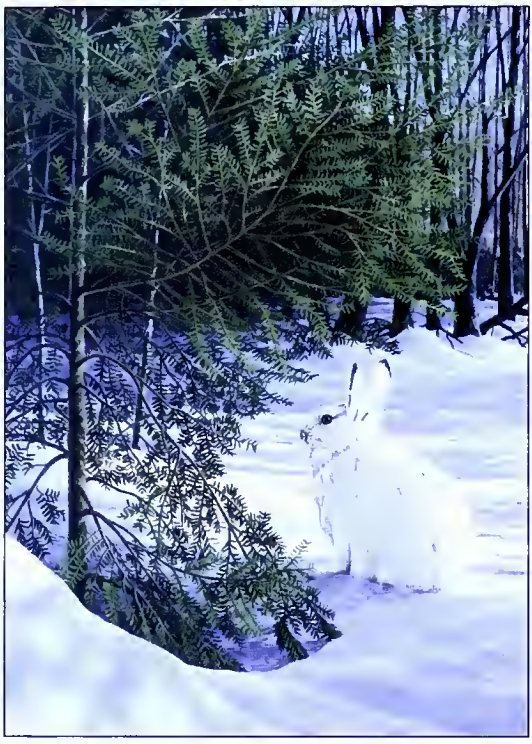
Among long yellow splinters are half shells of rotted bark scribed on the smooth side by insects like shards of ancient pottery. The iconic profile of a distant ridge, a flat silhouette in the diffused air, is framed by the slant of tilted boughs, a watercolor painting of sorts, within a watercolor.

The air grows chill, and I can sense a slight shifting of autumn to the spare bones of winter. It is a good time and place to take stock of the past year, to sort through the highlights. My review is cut short, though, by a handsome gray fox that threads its way through the branches of the windfall. It pads up the long trunk like a dog on a sidewalk, then jumps off and continues uphill. A few minutes later, a flock of turkeys skirts the clearing, raking clots of leaves back with their powerful feet and legs, quickly backing up to glean mast from the exposed ground. I enjoy their barely audible flock talk, the soft clucks and purrs. A far off rattle of a train, a sound that I have always enjoyed, keeps time with the steady patter of water that runs down a root through the ceiling of the overhang.

The autumn woods radiates beyond its physical perimeters, expanding into the being of the hunter, the clearing below continuing on in my mind; no need to think, to ponder any thought, only to revel in solitude, content to be sitting under a ledge in a rainstorm, arrow nocked, eyes searching.

Bob Sopchick

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HEMLOCK HARE, by Patrick Sharbaugh is the 2005 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. The snowshoe hare frequents the swampland, overgrown with hemlock, rhododendron, willows and alders common in the Pocono Region of northeastern Pennsylvania. The snowshoe brings a little of the Far North right here to the Keystone State.

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GAME NEWS

December 2005

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COVER PAINTING BY DWIGHT KIRKLAND
(Cover story on p. 28)

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MAY 10, 1999, is when I began my service as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. On December 31, 2005, I will retire. Six and a half years. Sounds like a long time, but it passed quickly. Looking back, I'm proud of what this agency accomplished. While some folks congratulate me, I believe that any praise should be directed to our hard-working and dedicated employees.



Soon after I started, I launched a series of State Game Lands tours, to show the public — particularly license buyers — how the agency uses sportsmen's dollars to improve wildlife habitat. These tours focused on the work of our land managers, food and cover corps, foresters and farm-game workers. We also showcased the many partnerships we have built with conservation organizations and local sportsmen's clubs. Also in my term, our Board of Game Commissioners approved the acquisition of nearly 49,000 acres.

We worked to highlight the wildlife research projects conducted by our biologists and Wildlife Conservation Officers, from the fawn mortality study to the peregrine falcon satellite-tracking study. These, as well as other research projects, were highlighted in articles in this magazine, news releases and on our website.

We have improved our customer-service features by developing an extensive website and by selling through "The Outdoor Shop" our licenses and other merchandise. We also are taking the first steps toward a point-of-sale system that will help streamline the license buying system for our issuing agents and license buyers.

Working with the Board of Game Commissioners, we established Wildlife Management Units for a more consistent measure of managing wildlife and to make it easier for hunters to identify where they are when afield. We created a concurrent deer/bear season in many WMUs; approved the taking of a second spring gobbler; expanded small game seasons; increased season lengths and bag limits for Canada geese; established a bobcat season; created November and September elk hunts; and approved the use of cable restraints for certified trappers to pursue coyotes and foxes.

While the debate over deer management continues, I'm proud that we expanded hunting opportunities: a week-long October muzzleloader season that includes the use of inline and percussion muzzleloaders with scopes; a 3-day October doe season for juniors, seniors, active duty resident military personnel and disabled hunters; a concurrent rifle deer season; and a Deer Management Assistance Program that empowers landowners to have a greater role in determining deer objectives on their properties and affords hunters greater opportunities.

For juniors, we created a special spring gobbler season; pheasant hunt, along with a mentoring component; and expanded waterfowl and squirrel hunting opportunities.

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. In the near future, the Game Commission will need to explore a license fee increase or alternative sources of funding, so that many of the cuts in programs and services can be restored. The future also holds out the hope of expanded hunting and trapping opportunities and a mentored youth hunting program.

As for me, my future holds out the hope for many more seasons of hunting with my grandchildren and doing what I can to help pass along our state's rich hunting and trapping heritage. I thank you all for the tremendous opportunity to play a role in guiding this great agency. — *Vern Ross*

letters

Editor:

I like *Game News*, but I wish you had more trapping stories.

Also, is the elk on the cover of the 2005-06 Hunting and Trapping Digest the one known as "Clubhorn," a bull that was injured in a fight with another bull in 1999?

I've never seen the elk myself, only pictures, and I wonder if he's still alive.

M. Kanagy
Allensville

The elk known as "Clubhorn" was killed, illegally, about five years ago. The elk featured on the cover of the current Digest looks similar, though. It was photographed by PGC photographer Hal Korber in 2004.

Editor:

I really enjoyed the September issue, especially the story "Pete's Guns." I, too, use a 16-gauge for pheasant hunting and enjoy hunting squirrels with a .22 and deer with my bow and a .270 WSM. I'm looking forward to receiving the October *Game News*.

C. Budnik
Northampton

Editor:

In your Safety Zone program, I used to get *Game News* for free. At first, when I didn't receive it anymore, I thought, oh, well. But it seems I missed it more and more, and this morning I was thumbing through the Digest and saw the *Game News* subscription blank.

My wife suggested that I subscribe for my birthday, and I'm telling you, I got a smile on my face from ear to ear. Can't wait for my first issue.

H. Wengerd
Mifflintown



Editor:

As a licensed taxidermist for 33 years, I've had many trophy deer and bear brought into my studio, including one of my own, above, and I've found that the best device for attaching a tag is a medium to large safety pin. After filling out your tag, fold it in half, then pin to the heavy upper fold of the ear. A safety pin will not damage an ear, and it will keep your tag secure.

D. Marin, Marin's Fine Art Taxidermy
Abington

Editor:

As a hunter for more than 40 years who hunts in four states, I believe that the cost of a Pennsylvania nonresident license is a great bargain. Where else in the East can a person hunt for deer, bear, elk, turkey, grouse, rabbits, squirrels, waterfowl, and more? Not in any other state I've hunted in or know about.

Yes, there may be fewer deer in some areas, but not increasing hunting license fees will prohibit the Game Commission from keeping and moving forward with many programs.

As a teacher in Pennsylvania, I'm sorry that our schools no longer get educational materials or have WCOs speak at our schools.

If, as outdoorsmen, we want to recruit more youth, we better wake up.

P. Lasavage
Wilmington, DE

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



The hunting season of 2003 turned out to be a dream season, but not because of any deer I got, but because of an everlasting friendship that formed in the nearby hills of West Virginia . . .

WITH my buck tag filled, I decided to try hunting in West Virginia, somewhere close to my home in Fayette County. After several futile days of trying to find private land to hunt, I decided to check out West Virginia's Coopers Rocks State Park, which is open to the public.

I located a good spot with a lot of deer sign. Although it was close to the highway, I felt pretty optimistic about getting a WV buck with my bow. I also was hoping to meet other hunters and make some new friends, but as the days went by I never saw a soul.

Then one morning, I was back at my truck, checking park maps for places to scout, when I heard, coming down the road, what sounded like a shotgun banging like crazy. I looked up and saw an old pickup rolling down the hill. It backfired and spit and sputtered right to me. I had to laugh. It was a welcomed sound. The old truck, a 1966 Chevy, pulled in behind mine and I acted like I was concentrating on the map. I heard a squeaky door swing open and I looked up to see a handmade walking cane hit the ground and a pair of bow-legs step out.

"Hey there, young fella. See anything this morning?"

"Yes, sir. I saw a few does and a little spike buck."

He laughed, "Yep, I see that spike buck all the time when I'm in here having a look-see."

We ended up talking for close to an hour, before I told him that I needed to go do some scouting and get ready for the evening hunt.

"Nah," he replied. "You have a while before ya need to get back in these woods." Then he asked me to follow him to his home just down the road.

How could I say no to an 85-year-old hunter? I did get a little concerned, though, not knowing the old fella and he was taking me down a windy, old back road like something out of a scary movie. After about 20 minutes, I noticed that we were almost right back to where we'd met. Upon arriving I asked, "Why did we go all the way around to just go a half mile up the road?"

He replied, "Just having a look-see, and you need to learn the area."

"Thanks," I said.

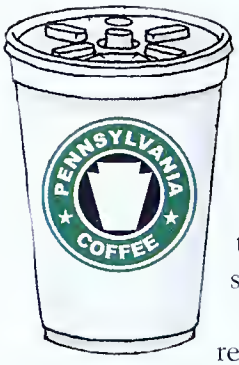
As we walked up and into his house I couldn't help but notice the large deer racks hanging on his porch. When I asked where he'd gotten all the big bucks, he responded by telling me that, in his day, he took them all on a small chunk down the road.

We entered his home and sat at the table while he put on a pot of coffee. After talk-

By Robert Gratson



illustrations by Mark Anderson



ing for a couple more hours — and killing the pot of coffee — we both agreed that I'd better get going if I was going to have enough time to get set up for the evening hunt.

He asked when I'd be returning and I told him that I'd be hunting all week. I went to my tree that evening feeling pretty good at having met this old man who was so full of pep and stories.

The next morning, as I was coming out of the woods, I saw a truck parked next to mine. As I got closer I realized it was the old Chevy. I giggled a little and stepped up my pace. We talked a while and went to lunch. Again we discussed his old hunts for hours and I learned more about him. He had lost his only son and hunting buddy in 1987 and had no grandkids. His only surviving family was a younger sister who lived with him, and she had no family, either.

I felt sad for the man. I couldn't imagine going through those later years as alone as he was. After lunch, we said our goodbyes and I was off to the woods again, but this time with an invite to his house for breakfast and coffee at 5:30 a.m.

I arrived at 5:30, figuring he'd still be in bed. Boy, was I wrong. He met me at the door and looked like he'd been up for hours. I handed him a fresh cup of coffee from the little convenience store back in PA that I visit every morning. We ate eggs, and all he could talk about was this cup of coffee. He insisted that it was the best he had ever had. I had a hunch that it really wasn't, but rather a hint for me to bring some more the next time I returned to visit.

Like all our others visits, though, when we were talking about hunting I just couldn't get the location of his favorite hunting spot out of him. Before I knew it, it was daylight and I was late getting into the woods. He looked at me and laughed. "You're not late," he said. "These deer won't move until 10."

I was in shock. It was the first time he'd spoken about when to be in the woods. For the next few hours, he introduced me to "Whitetail 101." The rest of the week went on with the same routine — morning coffee from PA and midday lunches — until November 6.

I arrived at his house at 5:30, and as soon as I got to his porch he said, "You'd better get in the woods. This is gonna be a heck of a morning. The deer were in the yard last night and the bucks were running does. Get outta here."

I handed him his coffee and jumped in the truck like I was on a 911 call. I drove for five minutes then began laughing at myself. Look at yourself, Rob, I thought, you're like a kid going to a candy giveaway. I slowed down and arrived at my spot.

I looked up and saw an old Chevy pickup rolling down the hill. It backfired and spit and sputtered right to me. I had to laugh.

Wouldn't you know it, after an hour of some of the best hunting in my life, I was sitting beside my WV archery buck. Later, as I was dragging it out, I had it almost back to the road when I saw the old man, with his cane, stumbling and cussing toward me. He was as excited as I was. After explaining to him what had transpired, all he could say was, "I told ya so. Let's go get him checked in."

As I was getting ready to go home, it occurred to me that I should ask him to follow me home and meet my family. Af-

ter a lot of "nahs" and "next times" he finally agreed. He enjoyed meeting my family and trying to steal my old bluetick hound. We took some pictures and then he headed home. I felt bad in a way, my WV archery season was over, and I figured I wouldn't be back until the gun season, a few weeks away. I told him to keep in touch, and he did. That very evening he called and asked what I was going to do with the deer. I knew what he was asking and I told him that I was going to bring it down to him in the morning and ask if . . .

He didn't wait for me to finish, "Heck, yeah I want it. I haven't had deer meat in 10 years."

He said to come down around 10 o'clock and to leave plenty of time. He wanted to show me something. For the rest of the night I wondered about just what it was he wanted to show me.

I showed up at 10 o'clock sharp, with his cup of coffee, and helped him hang the deer. Then he invited me to come along on a look-see. He drove me out some back road that led to an old dilapidated cabin in the middle of nowhere. He hadn't been there in years, he said, and I got the impression that it had been since his son passed away or shortly thereafter. We stepped out of the truck and I was in heaven. It was an old overgrown farm with apples everywhere, and there were buck rubs on every tree in sight.

"Look at the size of those rubs," I said.

He said, "Yeah, it's an old boy who's grandpappy I probably shot."

I knew right away that this was the spot he had talked about so many times. A map couldn't have shown me any more about the place. He said that he was going to clean up a bit inside and for me to have a look-see. I headed to the old apple tree down in the corner of the back fields. I knew right where it was.

I knew because of the hunt my new buddy had recounted to me many times since we'd met — the hunt of a magnificent 12-point he'd taken with his bow in 1975. I followed every footstep and stopped at every landmark he'd mentioned, reliving the story in every detail. I spent four hours walking the property, and saw lots of sign.



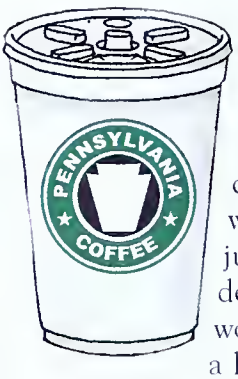
I arrived back at the cabin and we talked for a while as we sat on an old chain swing on the porch. It was then that he told me that the last time he'd hunted there was — not after his son had died, but — in 1991, when he had a bad heart attack while dragging out his last deer. He laughed and said, "All over a scrawny little doe, to boot."

I asked if I could hunt there and he said, "Heck yes. But not alone."

He didn't think it was safe to hunt alone, after what had happened to him. He told me to bring someone, as long as that's as far as it went, no other people. I had no problem with that.

We returned to his house and then I went home. We talked over the phone for the next couple weeks. I also stopped down for a few visits, with some PA coffee, of course, and did some scouting. I was getting ready for gun season and feeling pretty good. I couldn't get his old 12-point out of my head, and I knew I'd spend opening day down at that big apple tree.

When opening day rolled around I found myself, not at his house, but at



his cabin. The weather was horrible and we sat by the fire at 4 a.m. and drank our PA coffee. He said that the weather was too bad, but that just maybe a deer would wander around in it anyway and I would see something. But it was a large piece of land and, with me being the only one on it, I had a slim chance of seeing any deer if they were not moving.

Well, they were not. I didn't see anything at all, and the wind was blowing with a vengeance. I arrived back at the cabin at noon, soaked from head to toe. He asked if I was going back out and I told him, "Heck no. Not in this."

He laughed and said, "I didn't think you would make it this long." He stayed behind and I went home.

The next few days were not so bad. We had our coffee and lunches and I actually passed on four different bucks in hopes of getting a shot at one of two big ones I had jumped the second day. At least I was seeing deer and getting to know my new buddy even better.

I headed to the old apple tree down in the corner of the back fields. I knew right where it was.

On November 29 I woke to blizzard conditions and was seriously debating the trip to the cabin. I ended up going, despite the weather. We met and he said I was nuts for driving down and that the storm would make it tough to see anything more than 40 yards away. "What the heck," I said. "I'm here," and off I went.

But this time, instead of walking back to the fields, I opted to drive. I drove right past the place where I had planned to park, though, due to the blinding snow, and when it took me 15 minutes to find it, I was a little worried about finding my tree.

I was heading toward my tree when I saw him. My gun rang out just 50 yards from my truck. He was one of my biggest bucks ever. I hadn't even started field-dressing when I heard the backfiring and spitting. I walked to the field edge and



met him. He asked what I had shot.

"Hopefully not a little one like you did in archery season," he said, laughing.

But by the look on my face, he knew it was something special. As we walked up to the deer he was inventing words I'd never heard, laughing the whole time. He was ecstatic.

We loaded the deer into my truck and off to the check station we went. We took pictures and talked for about an hour before I headed home. As I was leaving, he told me to make sure I kept my tailgate down. "That's one to let 'em see, boy. His rack sticks up over the bed sides."

I asked if he wanted the meat and he

declined. He had enough to last all winter. He told me to be sensible, as I was unemployed with three kids. My brute was one of God's blessings that would sustain my family all winter.

My new buddy and I kept in touch on the phone and I visited him the day after Christmas, with a cup of coffee. He gave me a handmade knife from 1964 and some stories before I returned home. That was the last time I saw him.

My fiancée received a phone call on the first of January, from a woman who wouldn't leave a message, except that I call as soon as I got home. I'd been out bowhunting and I recognized the number. I called and asked for him. She said he'd passed away the night before, in his sleep, peacefully, and asked that I come right away.

It was 11 p.m. when I arrived at his house. His sister, whom I'd met only once, greeted me. As soon as she opened the door I was in tears. She asked me to sit at the table and said that the night before, Stanley talked about nothing but the deer I'd taken and the new friend he'd made after so many years. She asked if I would take something home to keep. I was a little skeptical, but she insisted that I see what it was.

She walked away, and in the few minutes she was gone, as I was sitting there all alone, I started to feel the loss. She came back and handed me some books and a photo album. I opened the photo album and they were all of his hunting pictures, including one of him and his 12-point by the apple tree in the front. Then I opened the books. They were his journals from more than 50 years of hunting. As I was going through them, she came back in the room and asked me to read the last seven pages. They began November 1, 2003. The preceding entry was October 30, 1991.

Reading through the last few pages, I was a wreck. Stanley wrote about nothing but his new friend and hunting buddy, and PA coffee. He wrote that he was hoping for better weather and better health for the coming year, for us to stay at the cabin and get that buck's grandpappy. After 13 years of giving up hunting and talking to people about hunting, I'd been the first that he'd met with the same passion to pursue the great animals in the wilds.

The final entry was: *11:45 p.m.*

> *I am not feeling too bad this evening but everything seems to have an eerie but peaceful quietness around the house. So I am guessing that journal entries for 2003-04 will be coming to a close this evening and I suppose the next entry will be just prior to the 2004 archery season on the farm. It has been a great year for me and, hopefully, for my new hunting buddy and friend Rob. It will be a nice feeling when those cups of rotten PA coffee start showing up on cool fall mornings from someone who's filled a place in my heart that has been void since 1987.*

The ironic thing is that there has been a void in my heart since the loss of my father in 1987 and Stanley had filled that void for me.

You can bet on one thing for sure. There will be a cup of that rotten PA coffee on his porch every morning that I am there next year. □





Christmas Memories of a Pennsylvania Hunter

By H. "Bumper" Bauer

IT WAS TWO DAYS before Thanksgiving, sometime in the mid-1950s. I was of age to hunt and as excited as any farm kid could be. I had no way of knowing at the time, but it was to be my year of awakening in many ways.

My grandfather had agreed to take me small game hunting. Even though I had been tagging along with him since I was eight, this year I could carry my own gun. He also told me I could go along with him on Christmas Eve, when he made his "trip." This annual trip of his had always been a mystery to me. It was the one time of year that I was not allowed to be Pap's sidekick. Until this year, that is.

Like clockwork on every Christmas Eve for as long as I could remember, in the early evening, I would watch as Pap loaded up the back of his green Studebaker pickup with burlap bags, and then drive to the end of our lane and disappear.

I often wondered where he went and what he did with all of those bags. Once, when I asked Gram where Pap went, she just smiled and said "on his trip."

Needless to say, after being told that I was going hunting with Pap, sleep didn't come easy. The next morning we were up at 4 o'clock, to do the milking and other chores, and then returned to the house for breakfast. Not a word was said about hunting, but after breakfast Pap said, "Well, Son, don't you think it's about time we get the shotguns and go see if we can't hunt up some game? That is unless you think it's too cold to hunt this morning."

"Cold, what cold?" I quickly replied, "It's just right to hunt, Pap."

At that time I didn't care if the cold turned me into a "kidcicle," as long as I

got to hunt. I can picture that day in my mind now and feel it with every one of my senses as if it were yesterday. I can hear the crunch of the frost-covered ground beneath our feet as we walked down the lane toward the barn. I can see our beagles Mike and Tillie once again, full of life, bouncing out in front of us, eager to get into the fields and thickets. I can smell the hay and the sweet scent of molasses cattle feed drifting from the barn when we stopped by it to load our shotguns before going into the fields, where I knew rabbits and pheasants would surely be found. I can remember that hollow *thunk* the paper shells made when I slid them into the barrels of that old Fox double. I can feel the cold wind blowing against the back of my neck, seemingly urging me onward as we started into the field that morning.

It was as if every one of my senses suddenly, without warning, had come to life. Every muscle in my body was alive. I was tingling with anticipation. At the same time, though, I felt a warm inner peace that I didn't recognize then. At that moment, if someone had asked me what I was feeling, I would have simply described it as just being happy about my first pheasant hunt with Pap.

But now, after all these years, I believe I can put what I was feeling at that moment into a much clearer light. The instant I entered the field on that frosty fall morning with my grandfather, I left my childhood behind and joined the brotherhood of hunters — a special world that is deeply cherished.

We had gone little more than 50 yards when the flutter of wings and the unexpected cackle startled me. I instantly remembered what Pap had taught me. Wait for the rise, follow through on the bird and fire. After the shot a fat long-tailed rooster was stretched out in the weeds. I remember glancing toward Pap, hoping he had seen my shot. He was standing there with a big smile on his face, lighting his pipe, his shotgun folded over his arm. Of course, he had made no effort to raise his gun.

I picked up the bird, and after admiring its colors was about to place it in my coat when Pap stopped me. "Aren't you forgetting something?" he asked.

For the life of me I couldn't think of what he was talking about, so I blurted out, "Oh, I forgot to clean it."

"No, Son, you forgot to give thanks for what you just received." Then he took the pheasant from my hand, and we each dropped to one knee, and as he held the bird in his hand, he placed my hand on it. Together we stroked the iridescent feathers and gave our thanks to the creator for the bounty received. That was a tradition he taught me that morning and one that I have continued throughout my life. That day and its events are without a doubt the reason that I love hunting pheasants and grouse so much.

A couple of hours later, when we returned to the house, Pap and I had three more pheasants and a couple of rabbits for Gram. Gram loved fried rabbit. By the time the game and guns were cleaned and the dogs fed it was suppertime. After we ate and got the kitchen cleaned up, Pap and I went to the barn to get a stack of burlap feed sacks. It suddenly hit me that these were the same sacks he always used when he went on his "trip," but it would not be until later that I would discover what was put into the bags. Gram had wanted them brought to the house to be washed before Pap's Christmas Eve trip.

Finally the big day arrived, December 24. After supper Pap set up a long table in the cellar, between the fruit cellar and the big chest freezer, and then I helped him and Gram wrap and pack into each burlap bag a frozen turkey, chicken or half a smoked ham, along with potatoes, onions and carrots from our garden, apples from the



orchard and a jar of Gram's peaches and plumb jelly, and a loaf of bread. After each bag was packed they were carefully tied closed, with different colored ribbons to indicated what each contained.

That Christmas Eve, as Pap and I loaded the bags into the truck, brought one of those snows with the big soft snowflakes that look like cotton balls. As we drove out our lane toward the road the mystery of Pap's trip was solved. My grandfather said that we would be delivering the bags to folks in the area who needed a little help getting through the holidays. When we arrived in the city our first stop was at the Salvation Army office. Pap went inside and returned with a piece of paper, with a list of names and addresses. These would be the folks who received the bags.

By the time we got home that night the drifting snow had nearly closed our lane. Gram had cider and warm apple pie waiting for us. As we sat near the brightly lit Christmas tree in the parlor, enjoying our midnight snack, Pap put in plain words for me why he made this trip every year. He said that the good Lord had been good to us with another good harvest and that this yearly "trip" was our family's way of helping those who were less fortunate and our way of saying thanks for what we had received.

As kids are curious about such things I had to ask. Why did he do it at night, didn't he want the people to know who helped them? Pap just simply said, "No, they don't have to know; who we are is of no importance. All they need to know is that there are folks who care."

Over the years Pap and I continued to hunt as much as possible, and as the farm grew and prospered there were more "trips" made both on Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve. As I grew older it was a toss-up which I enjoyed more, the hunting or the trips, because each had its own reward.

On that Thanksgiving I learned how it feels to be a hunter and on Christmas Eve I learned how it feels to give of yourself to benefit others. Some may feel that was a lot for a young boy to understand, but I did learn the world of the outdoors can be truly wondrous if you're receptive to it, and that giving to others can be the best feeling you'll ever get.

Times have changed, but many folks still need help, so please keep in mind that an antlerless tag used to feed the hungry, a trip to the red Salvation Army bucket with an envelope or helping out someone who has no one else, can give you a feeling that will stay with you throughout the year. A gift of caring does not have to be cash, it can be something as simple as shoveling an elderly neighbor's walk when it snows or checking in on them over the winter to see if they need anything. Gifts from the heart do not have to be expensive.

From our home to yours, may you all be blessed with all that the season has to offer. □

The Handgun Poacher

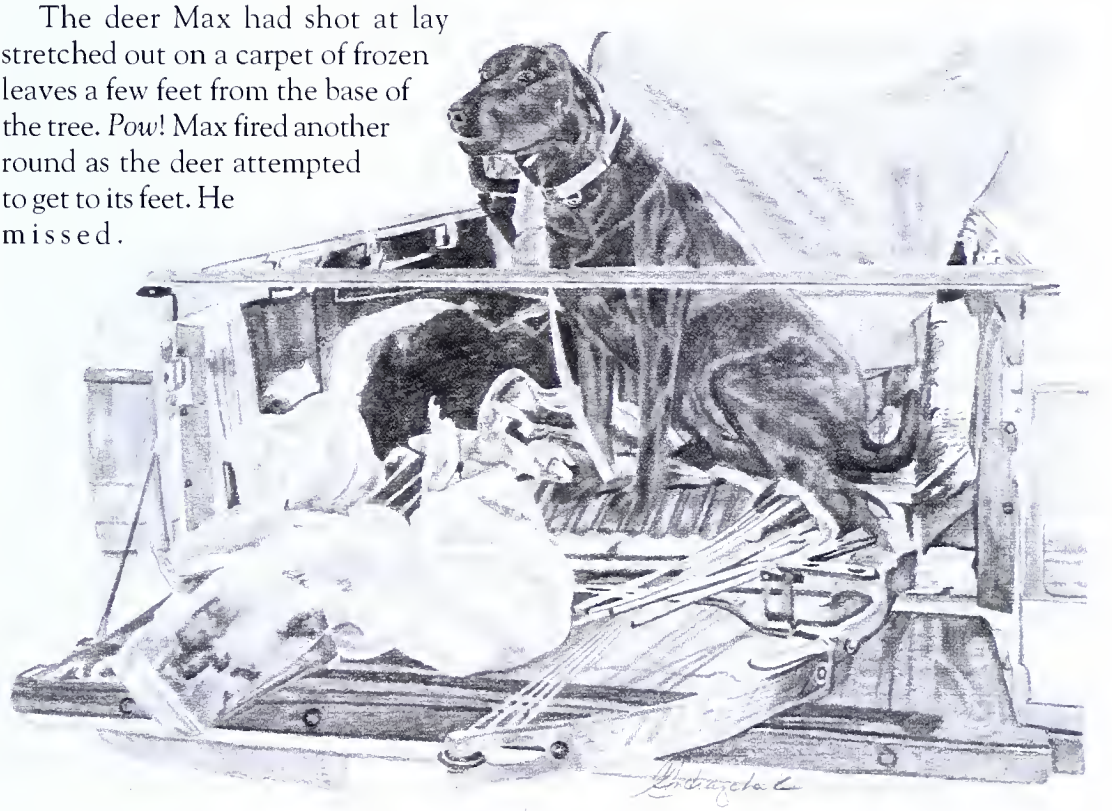
By Jonathan S. Zuck
Bedford County WCO

ON A COLD, cloudy, Friday afternoon during the 2002-03 flintlock season, Max Sprankel climbed into a treestand and got situated. With dusk approaching, he knew that if he were to get a shot at a deer, it would have to be soon. He wasn't in the tree long before a group of seven antlerless deer walked within range. Deciding none offered a good shot, Max lowered his gun and waited for a better opportunity. His patience paid off when the small herd ambled his way, eventually stopping at the base of his tree. Max picked out a large doe, lined up the sights of his 9mm handgun, and *Pow*! Six deer bounded away.

The deer Max had shot at lay stretched out on a carpet of frozen leaves a few feet from the base of the tree. *Pow*! Max fired another round as the deer attempted to get to its feet. He missed.

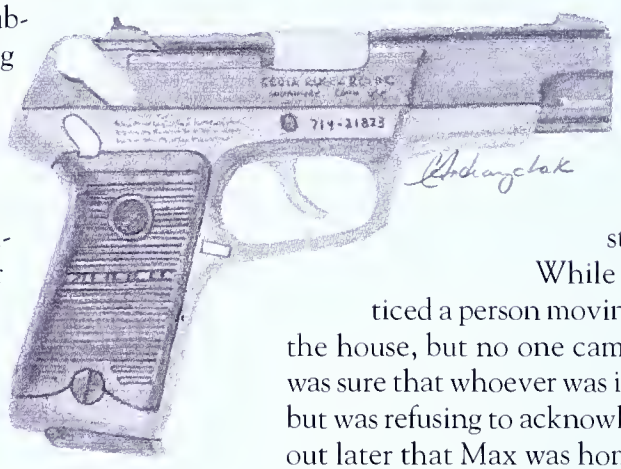
Determined to not let the deer escape, Max scrambled down from his perch and rapidly fired three shots at it, finally killing it. Three days into January and I had my first poaching case of the new year.

My wife and I returned home from church services on Sunday, January 5, 2003, and as I normally do after being away, I checked the answering machine in my office. The red light was "winking" at me. The message was from Deputy Jeff Gainer, saying he had information that a deer had been poached on Friday. Because Jeff lived



near the woodlot where the violation had allegedly occurred, I called and asked him to go see what he could find, and to get names and statements from any witnesses.

Jeff scoured the area and found parts from a deer. He gathered the evidence and interviewed a few people living in the area. One witness said that late in the afternoon on Friday, January 3, she saw Max walking down the road, wearing a camouflage hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans and rubber boots, heading toward the woodlot. Approximately an hour later she heard one shot, followed by four more. The witness explained the shots were more like pops and definitely were not from a flintlock muzzleloader. The sound and rapid succession of the shots indicated that we were dealing with someone using a semi-automatic handgun.



Around 5 p.m. that same day another person observed the same man exiting the woodlot carrying a bulging garbage bag. This individual asked what the man's name was and what he was doing. The scruffy bearded man spouted off, "My name is Max Sprankel, and I just shot my first doe, and no one is going to do anything about it!" The person then asked Max what he used to shoot the deer with and Max pulled a black semi-auto handgun from his pocket and declared, "I shot it with this, and what are you going to do about it?"

Max was 34 years old and lived with his parents in a house across from the woodlot. The neighbors perceived Max to be a "unique" individual, one who made them feel uneasy whenever he was around. Due to Max's nature, the neighbors were hesitant about getting involved, and all of them wanted to remain confidential informants. I realized that this may pose problems in getting a search warrant or prosecuting the case, but at this point I had to press on.

Deciding that I needed to pay Sprankel a visit, I picked up Deputy Gainer and we drove to his residence. "Officer Zuck of the Pennsylvania Game Commission," I declared as I knocked on the wooden door of the 2-story farmhouse. While knocking, I noticed a person moving around inside the house, but no one came to the door. I was sure that whoever was inside heard me, but was refusing to acknowledge us. I found out later that Max was home with his parents, and he told them not to answer the door.

With whoever it was inside unwilling to cooperate and my belief that Max may use his handgun against anyone who got in his way, I decided that the best course of action was to come back later with more help and a search warrant.

A WCO for less than a year, I had never applied for a search warrant. I spent the following day scouring over copies of search warrants I had received while a trainee at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. After carefully documenting and describing the buildings and vehicles on the Sprankel property to be searched, as well as gathering statements from other neighbors who saw deer or deer parts in Max's backyard, I applied for and was granted a search warrant by the district judge to search the Sprankel premises.

WCOs Jason DeCoskey, Steve Martin, Linda Swank, John Veylupek and Dirk

Remensnyder met me at the local township building early the next morning to develop a plan for serving the warrant and conducting the search. After a brief meeting we drove to Max's residence. Max's white Ford Ranger was parked in the driveway, indicating he was probably home. Dirk and I headed for the front door while the other officers took positions around the house. My primary concern was not locating the deer but, rather, securing any and all firearms inside the home, especially the handgun.

"State officers, please open the door. We have a warrant to search your house," I said as I rapped on the door. This time a petite woman cautiously opened the door. It was Charlene, Max's mother. I explained to her why we were there and then asked where we could find Max.

"He's upstairs sleeping," she said.

I told her we needed to speak with him, so Charlene took us up a narrow stairway to a second story bedroom. We woke up Max and secured a loaded 9mm semi-auto handgun near his bed. I escorted Max and Charlene to the living room and advised them they were to remain there until the search was completed.

"Don't you think this is silly?" Charlene asked.

"No," I responded. "This is a very serious matter."

Officers Velupek and Martin interviewed Max and his mother, while the other officers and I searched for deer parts and other evidence of the violation we were investigating.

In the bed of Max's pickup we found plastic storage bags full of partly frozen venison hidden under a snow-covered tarp. We also found fresh meat in a mixing bowl in the refrigerator. Onyx, one of the Game Commission's police canines, along with her handler WCO Linda Swank, helped locate deer parts that had been buried in the snow in a side yard and at the kill site. In addition, in the truck's cab we found a journal belonging to Max. In it Max had written that he was an unsuccessful poacher, but he had it pretty good because no one had ever arrested him for it. At least not until now.

In a written statement Max admitted to killing the deer with his handgun, quartering it in the woods, and then transporting it to his house in garbage bags. Max also said that after Jeff and I had visited his home on the previous Sunday, he transferred the meat from his chest freezer in the basement to the bed of his pickup truck. Max wrote that he knew we would return, so he was hoping to give it away to friends rather than have it confiscated and "fed to the game wardens or their police dogs."

After finding the handgun, deer parts and obtaining a written statement from Max, I felt we had sufficient evidence to successfully prosecute him for the unlawful taking of a deer and hunting with an unlawful firearm. I filed charges and, to my surprise, Max entered a not guilty plea and requested a hearing.

On the day of the hearing Max never appeared to defend himself, and based on the evidence presented by the commonwealth he was found guilty of both violations and lost his hunting and furtaking privileges for two years.

Poaching cases, much like the poachers themselves, come in all shapes and sizes. This one is the most memorable and unusual case I investigated during the three years I served as a WCO in Lancaster County. However, this story is yet another example of the positive outcome of the public working with the Game Commission. When concerned sportsmen and neighbors care enough to come forward with the necessary information to help prosecute those who steal from our natural resources, we all benefit. □


Kirkland

First Miss

SWIRLING SNOWFLAKES filled the air on this, the first day of the 2002 firearms deer season. In fact, the weather word for the day was snow, snow and more snow, as 8 to 10 inches of the white stuff already blanketed the forest floor in Warren County. As any seasoned Pennsylvania hunter will attest, snow covered ground is desirable, but there is a limit. Opinions quickly change when winter's precipitation clings to every twig and branch, limiting visibility.

My 14-year-old son Greg settled into a shooting position next to me on a mountain where he had experienced good luck on past hunts. When he was 10 he was with me when I got a big doe. For his 11th birthday his mother and I presented him with a 6.5x55mm Swedish Mauser. I used that rifle to harvest another doe as Greg again sat beside me as a spectator. I remember the look of satisfaction in his eyes when that deer dropped in its tracks.

When Greg was 12 he killed a large doe with a single well-placed shot to the heart. I was proud of him that day, not because of his kill, but because he had hunted hard and endured a tough day in the woods. Snow covered the ground that day, but the 38 degrees and steady drizzle produced a fog that hovered in the forest for most of the day.

On the first Saturday of deer season the next year Greg killed another doe. This jittery animal nearly escaped, but made the mistake of stopping for a brief moment, presenting a broadside shot. Again Greg placed a single bullet into the vitals.

This past season, at 14, Greg killed an antlerless deer during the early October season. Once again, he needed only one shot. Not bad, I thought, three years, three shots and three whitetails.

Getting a Buck

So now, with an antlerless deer already to his credit for the year, Greg focused on getting a buck. As the day wore on, though, I became increasingly aware that he didn't quite seem himself. He had stumbled earlier, when we began our climb up the slope. He managed to keep his muzzle pointed in a safe direction, which was, of course, my first concern. After realizing the slip was without detrimental consequences, I couldn't help but chuckle. Perhaps I'd embarrassed him. Teenagers can be overly sensitive at times. Opting to ignore the situation, I reasoned his mood would soon improve.

The first deer to appear was a doe. Knowing I could take a doe, Greg whispered, asking if I could see it. My gun was already up and I had the deer in my sights, but I quickly realized the deer was small, most likely a button

By Jerry Bush

buck, so I let it pass. As expected, though, the excitement of seeing the deer was enough to improve my teenager's mood. Timing is everything, so when I noticed this reaction, I felt it was safe to question him a bit. I quietly asked him if anything was bothering him. He shook his head, but less than a minute later he shared his doubts of actually getting a shot at a buck. That's when I realized I had been negligent in keeping the hunting experience fun.

His previous successes — plus his 5-11 stature — caused me to temporarily forget he was, after all, still but a 14-year-old. He really hadn't seen many bucks during his few years afield, especially during hunting seasons. It occurred to me that as a kid, I also thought harvesting a buck was nearly impossible. In spite of all of his achievements, my son still needed encouragement. Heck, at 47, even I require a shot of optimism from time to time.

Many Deer Tracks

Recalling that we had encountered many deer tracks in the snow when we climbed the hillside, I asked if he didn't think some of those imprints belonged to a buck or two. I followed up my question by reminding him of a large 8- or 10-point buck we had seen in the area during archery season. "Where do you suppose that buck is right now?" I asked. I assured him that the buck could be heading our way at this very minute, and reminded him that it takes only a second to turn a deer season into a lasting memory.

Fifteen minutes had passed when a squirrel leaped from a tree trunk onto a hemlock branch, but lost its grip and fell into the deep snow.

After Greg and I chuckled about the snow covered bushytail, I reminded the youngster that witnessing such occurrences is the real fun of hunting.

I'm normally incredibly scent conscious when deer hunting, but when my son accompanies me I do make some concessions, such as encouraging him to eat a snack. I have yet to meet a teenager who doesn't delight in devouring several treats during the day. My wife has this theory about chocolate, claiming candy has a positive effect on a person's mood. Who am I to argue? It certainly seemed as though Greg was again enjoying himself.

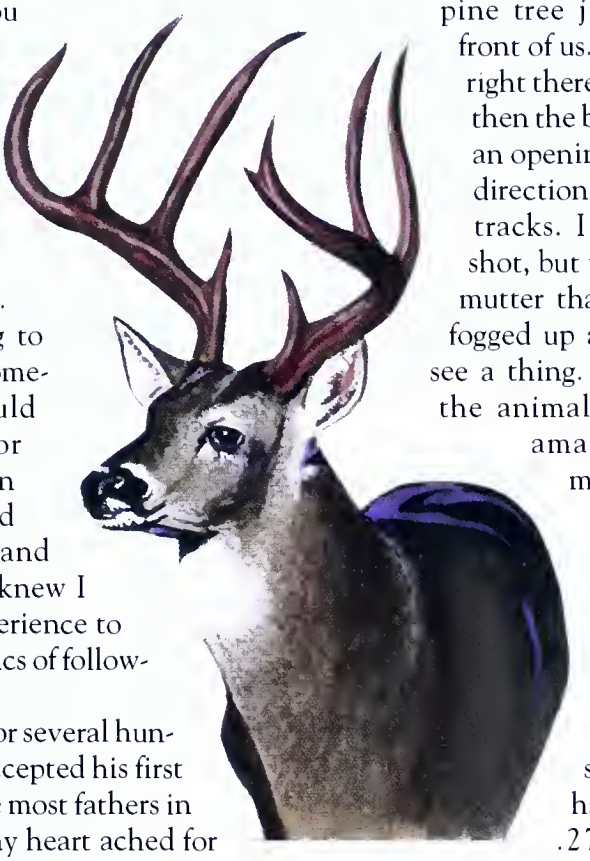
I glanced away for a second, but when I turned back, my son had his rifle to his shoulder. Looking beyond his muzzle, I could see a small deer passing through a narrow ravine. I was about to tell Greg to lower his gun when my eyes caught a glimpse of another deer passing through the evergreen trees on a ridge, just beyond the small deer, and it was a buck. Suddenly the 6.5x55mm cracked, and as the sound echoed through the valley, several animals sprang into the hardwoods above the hemlock trees. Among them, running for all it was worth, was a nice buck, but it didn't appear to be hit.

Waiting to hear Greg shoot again, I turned and saw Greg frantically fumbling with a jammed cartridge case. I calmly pulled the spent case from the breech while encouraging Greg to relax. The buck had stopped behind a tree less than 100 yards in front of us, but he soon bolted. To Greg's credit, he remembered some advice I had given him long ago: If you don't have a good shot, you shouldn't take it. He lowered his rifle.

Dejected, the young hunter looked to me for comfort; it was definitely a time when a father must find words of encouragement. Although the buck had displayed no signs of being hit, it was an opportunity to use the situation as a learning experience. "Come on, let's make sure he isn't hit," I said. We walked to where the deer had been when Greg fired and found fragments of displaced snow and dirt scattered

in a small area about five yards beyond the animal's tracks. There was no sign of blood. Greg was ready to end it there, and his mood immediately fell. He had never missed a deer before, and it was tough for him to accept that his first miss was at a respectable buck.

"Don't give up yet," I said. "You still can't be certain you missed." I followed the tracks, instructing Greg to stay on my heels, hoping to find a drop of blood or any other sign of a hit. Greg kept looking to me, hopeful that somehow his dad would come through for him. I believed in my heart that he had rushed the shot and missed, but I also knew I had to use the experience to teach Greg the ethics of following up every shot.



After tracking for several hundred yards, Greg accepted his first miss as reality. Like most fathers in such a situation, my heart ached for the young hunter, who now expressed that this was the worst day of his life.

"Hey, it's only 9:30 on opening day," I said. "You think this is a bad day, but you've already had more excitement than most hunters will get today." He found it small consolation, but I had to put as much of a positive spin on the experience as possible. My last advice was a reminder to "keep it fun."

After enduring the cold and my son's mood for a couple more hours, I suggested we change tactics. Still-hunting, I figured, would provide a change of scenery and occupy my young hunter's mind. The boy's heart wasn't in it, though, and I remember praying as we walked, "Lord, please provide another shooting opportunity for the kid."

As we proceeded along the side of the mountain I spotted a deer moving towards us, and the antlers were visible immediately. I motioned to Greg to get ready. The boy still hadn't raised his rifle as the deer stepped behind a pine tree just 50 yards in front of us. "Get ready, he's right there," I pleaded. Just then the buck stepped into an opening, looked in our direction and froze in its tracks. I waited for the shot, but then heard Greg mutter that his scope was fogged up and he couldn't see a thing. Fully expecting the animal to bolt, I was amazed when it merely started walking off. Quickly exchanging rifles with my son, I encouraged him to hold steady and squeeze. Greg had never fired my .270 before, but when the rifle boomed the 5-point leaped straight up, bolted up the hill, and then crashed into a tree less than 50 yards from where it had stood when hit. I gave my son a bear hug, congratulating him on his first buck.

End of story? Well, not quite. As the happy youngster tagged his buck, I felt compelled to leave the boy with one last lesson. "I hope you realize you were rewarded for sticking it out," I said. The young man looked up, smiled, and nodded that he did, and then he said, "Thanks, Dad; I promise I'll always keep it fun from now on." □

Managing Deer & Habitat Health



Last month, in his article, "Managing Deer – Setting the Direction," Cal DuBrock, Director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management, explained how the Game Commission's Deer Management Plan was developed. Over the next several months, the three goals of the plan will be presented in more detail. This month's focus is on the goal of managing deer for healthy habitat. The two other goals, managing for a healthy herd and to reduce human/deer conflicts, will be addressed in future issues. To view the Deer Management Plan, visit the Game Commission's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

DEER, like all other animals, cannot survive without adequate habitat. Just as pastureland can support only so many cattle, Pennsylvania's forests can support only so many deer. And, just as poor quality pastures support fewer cattle than high quality pastures, poor forest habitat supports less deer — and other wildlife — than high quality forests.

On the same note, just as cattle affect the pasture on which they graze, deer affect habitat where they browse. Too many cattle and the pasture gets overgrazed, too many deer and the habitat gets over-browsed. As a result, the habitat no longer supports the deer and other wildlife populations like it could and should.

When a forest gets over-browsed, not only deer are affected, but also virtually all other species that live in the forest. Research conducted on the Allegheny National Forest showed that as deer densities increased, songbird species and numbers decreased. The decrease in songbirds was attributed to the reduced amount of remaining woody vegetation where deer had browsed away a significant amount of the forest understory.

"Who cares about songbirds, shrubs and flowers? We want more deer." For some, this is the sentiment when it comes to deer management: The focus must be on deer only. Those with such an opinion, however, don't understand that the same habitat declines that affect songbirds and shrubs, also affect deer. For a deer, habitat is food. If there is no vegetation for songbirds to nest, there is no vegetation for deer to eat.

Without small trees, shrubs and wildflowers, deer have little to eat in forested areas. Further, as habitat quality declines, so does nutritional intake. Poorer nutrition results in lower reproduction. Instead of a group of 10 does producing 17 fawns per year with good nutrition, the same group produces only nine fawns. This translates into fewer deer and smaller bucks for hunters.

Managing deer to maintain or improve habitat health is a sound and responsible goal, one most hunters appreciate and support. In a 2002 Game Commission survey,



Hal Korber

the majority of deer hunters believed that deer affect plants and animals, and nine out of 10 hunters agreed that deer populations should be balanced with natural food supplies.

Proper deer management is crucial to the Game Commission's mission of managing wildlife and habitat for current and future generations, but putting that management into action is not a simple task. For starters, what is healthy habitat? The definition may vary by individual values and by areas of the state. For some people, healthy habitat may mean maximum regeneration of commercial timber species. For others, it may mean abundant wildflowers. Still others interpret it as creating food plots to support more deer. No single definition will satisfy everybody.

The Game Commission's challenge is to develop a way to measure habitat health that takes into account the tremendous variability in habitats across the state, and people's expectations. In developing ways to evaluate habitat heatlh, the agency is considering the types of data that currently exist, suitability across Wildlife Management Units statewide, usefulness for monitoring deer population changes, and how factors other than deer might influence those measures. The strengths and weaknesses of the various ways for monitoring habitat health are being evaluated as this part of the Deer Management Plan takes shape.

As monitoring methods are developed, they'll help the agency determine where it is in relation to achieving the goal of managing deer to maintain and, where appropriate, restore habitat health. Achieving this goal will benefit all of Pennsylvania's flora and fauna as well as citizens, too.

Deer and other wildlife cannot survive without habitat. To meet its mission to manage wildlife and habitats for current and future Pennsylvanians, the Game Commission cannot focus its deer management efforts only on deer abundance.

The impacts of deer on habitat and the impact of habitat on deer must be a part of a responsive and responsible deer management program, and that's exactly what we're in the process of developing. □

PENN'S WOODS JOURNAL

Written and Illustrated by

Bob Sopchick

Chapter Two

IN SILENCE, the six of us hiked up the steep trail through 20 inches of snow, stepping carefully across the uneven talus tumbled from the great sandstone escarpment, threading our way through the solemn black boulders and tilted obelisks striped with the shadows of a crisp February afternoon. Once on top, we took the tram road to my father's deer stand.

I scattered his ashes there, among the oaks and hickories, on that high bright ridge that captures and holds the sun for much of the day; "his mortal remains forever now," a friend later wrote, "part of the soil, the very birdsong, and ultimately the breeze and the autumn scent."

He would rest here, on this gentle upland flat etched with deer trails and our memories, his favorite place in all the world. The words of Native American N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer prize-winning author, could be describing the way Dad thought of his deer stand:

"Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience: to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder upon it, to dwell upon it.

"He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it.

"He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of the moon and the colors of the dawn and dusk."



After some fine words were spoken and a few stories told, the others filed down while I lingered there alone until the sun sank deeper and the long shadows from the oaks ran electric blue.

Next to his stand was the concave dish of a deer bed. The first deer taken from his stand was an 8-point, his first buck, and the last deer, also an

8-point, was taken by me when he could no longer climb the mountain. We often sat here together, one year each of us taking a deer only minutes apart.



I sat on the log seat and by habit looked around, the woods a gallery of cherished images framed by the stark hardwoods. Once, before the light of day, we sat here and watched a meteor shower, so dazzled by the display that we forgot the numbing chill. On warm autumn afternoons when there was a lull we would sit quietly with our bows and watch the antics of squirrels in the leaves. Sometimes we just sat and talked; talked about how fortunate we were to be in Pennsylvania, in this place together, to be hunters. Only a few years ago we listened as the woods rang with the refrain of dozens of whip-poor-wills, and I could recall the many times brothers-in-law Randy and Dave and I would rendevous here at lunchtime to share Dad's thermos of soup and talk of what we had seen that morning, of what we had seen in years past.

It was the prospect of deer that brought us here 25 years ago, and the hunting was great. A quarter-century is a good portion of a hunter's life, but seemed only a fleeting moment now among the constants of the wind, the gentle slope of this ancient ridgetop and the crepuscular rays of the sun exploding from the belly of a cloud before dropping behind the mountain.

It was difficult to leave, but I followed the set of deer tracks leading from the deer bed down through the big rocks, down through a notch in the escarpment. At the bottom of the hollow I turned and looked back. The great sheer wall of sandstone loomed like the imposing walls of a fortress, secure and strong. No monument fashioned by the hand of man through all of time could compare to the miles-long rift of rock that now harbored the ashes of my father.

I had often written of our time together on these pages, and when he passed on I had to let a hunting season go by before I could write a final story. I struggled with it until the answer came from an unlikely source, in a narrative written by my sister, Janet, which in her own words follows here.

WHILE OTHER HUNTERS head to camps and all over the state, our home out in the country becomes the hunting camp for our family. With lots of public ground all around there's no need to travel, and I enjoy having everyone here. Our camp consists of my husband Dave, brother Bob, brother-in-law Randy and my son-in-law Chad. It would be so very different this year, though, without Dad, who passed away in February. He was the catalyst that spurred on the excitement of the hunt, the keeper of our stories, whose enthusiasm added spark and zest to every day afield.

With the patriarch hunter gone, I knew the guys were taking it hard, but they were trying their best to carry on the tradition. For the first time I decided that I would hunt deer this year. It had been many years since I went hunting, but something compelled me to join them.

We readied all our equipment in the big den. Dave and I packed all our gear in a huge expedition frame pack that I could hardly lift. We had spent lots of time scouting out the game lands and found lots of sign far back in.

I asked Bob to bring the Remington .35 Whelen that Dad always used; I thought it might be special to use this rifle instead of my own. Bob had bought the Whelen back in 1988, but Dad had commandeered it from him and used it every season. It was very accurate, and every deer taken with it dropped on the spot.

I would wear Dad's coat and matching bibs, so the only gear I purchased was a pair of insulated boots. Dad was 6-3 and I'm 5-6, but with a bit of adjustment I would get by just fine. I put my ID in a small laminated case with the last thing Dad had given me, two dollars rolled tightly together that I won from him on a basketball game when he was in the hospital. I buttoned the case in the front pocket on the bibs, and after making everyone a lunch for the next day, turned in at midnight.



We started down the trail at 5:00 a.m. The night air was brisk and we didn't need our flashlights as a full moon lit our path. Bob and Randy broke off to north to hike to their respective stands, and after a long downhill hike, Chad dropped off at the bottom of the valley. Dave and I continued on, and after climbing a steep hillside we found our spot and set up.

We sat on a log in front of a big oak and waited for first light. Everything was still and quiet. I was not very comfortable, though, because I was sitting on some grapevines. I tried to move slowly until I found a more comfortable position and noticed Dave giving me sideways glances. I finally settled in and watched the woods come alive.

Living out in the country, I love to watch wildlife, but being in the woods and seeing chickadees, squirrels and turkeys begin their day up close is different than watching them from behind a picture window.

A forkhorn buck with white antlers showed first, followed by a doe. Both deer were browsing along and filed right by us. Dave had already filled his antlerless tags with his muzzleloader, and it was bucks only for me.

Several shots rang out far down the hollow and someone was yelling excitedly. It sounded like Chad, who is new to hunting. After a while, curiosity got the better of us and Dave walked down over the hill to see if Chad needed any help. Without Dave there to give me any of his "quit fidgeting" looks I positioned myself farther down the log for a better view.

It was mostly thick and brushy, but I could see almost 100 yards down a long straight alley that offered a clear shooting lane. Crows called, robins and nuthatches flitted from tree to tree, chipmunks scrambled along the crisscross maze of logs. I watched the nervous flip of a squirrel's tail as it sat upon a tall stump, and then caught the movement of a flock of turkeys feeding on the bonanza of wild grapes.

I tensed when several deer, moving from left to right, stopped at the alley. There were three of them, about 80 yards away. The first deer, a small doe, jumped across the opening. The next was also a doe that eased across, browsing along the edge. The third deer was a buck, heavier and with bigger antlers than the little forkhorn we had seen earlier. His head was down, though, and I couldn't tell if he was legal, and he crossed the lane. Very slowly they worked their way uphill and then I had a clear view of the buck's antlers and saw that he had — be still my pounding heart — nine points.

When the buck put his head down I knelt against the log to brace myself. "Give me some luck, Dad" I said to myself, patting the laminated case that held my lucky money. The buck came closer. When the buck moved into an opening about 60 yards out he lifted his head, ears up, nostrils flaring, a ray of yellow light catching his face and antlers. I fired and the deer went down.

I made my way to the buck and yelled for Dave, but he was already on his way. After dressing and tagging my buck, we sat and ate lunch. This was obviously a good spot, and we waited a while, but I was too excited and couldn't stop talking, so we decided to get my buck back. We were a long way from the truck, and most of it was uphill. We alternated turns, but I don't know which was more difficult, dragging the buck or carrying that big frame pack, guns and coats. It took hours, 25 steps at time, until we reached the top. With rubbery arms I slid the buck the last 50 yards out to the road while Dave walked down to the parking area to get the truck. Next year we'll definitely have a deer cart.

While I waited I remembered all the details of the day: the morning chill and the aroma of the leaves in the deep woods, the sounds of the birds and squirrels, and the careful footfalls of the deer. The sunshine warm on my face.

I could hear Dad saying, "Way to go, kid." I took my lucky two dollars and rolled them tighter and slid them into the .35 Whelen brass, where they would always stay. My good luck charm.

When Dave returned to the truck Chad was waiting. He hadn't connected but was amazed when he saw my deer. Back home they hung my deer beneath the porch. When Bob and Randy returned, Dave went over to their vehicle before they got out and asked how they had done. "I got a big doe," said Bob. Dave stepped aside and said "Janet got a deer, too."



JANET STOOD NEXT to her buck, beaming. She told us the details of her hunt; new words from a new deer hunter to laminate to the many layers of our collective history. I could see in her eyes that same look that Dad always had when he showed a buck to Mom, relating in detail his account of the day.

"Chapter two," I said. "Here we go again. I'll never get to use my Whelen now."

At first, his absence seemed as if a familiar mountain had suddenly and completely been removed from the landscape, but I think everyone realized that the mountain was not gone, that we were standing upon it all the while, and the view was clear and good; that our time together was not done, but had only shifted, as summer shifts to autumn, as one chapter into the next.

In Praise of the Open-Sighted .30-30

By Reverand Rob Joy

"I SEE yer goin' primitive," my younger brother Rande kidded me." Go ahead. You'll have a good excuse when a nice one walks in front of you and you miss," he chided.

"Primitive is the only way to go," I shot back, as I stepped out of our Warren County camp into the cold, blustery, snowy afternoon on the first day with my iron-sighted Model 94 Winchester .30-30.

Three consecutive years of harvesting nice bucks had been followed by a dry spell for several years, and despite hunting hard, I hadn't even taken an antlerless deer. So, with a hankering in my heart and an empty freezer, I was intent on getting some venison. Rande had anchored an albino doe that morning, and my dad had downed a nice 5-point, but the morning had not gone well for me, as the only deer I had seen was a 3-point I'd jumped out of its bed. It was safe for this year, but I hoped to see it again the following year. I had been carrying my Ruger No. 1 .30-06 with a 3-9x scope, but the scope, even mounted all the way back, was too far forward to get on target quickly without uncomfortably stretching my neck forward. I could not have gotten onto that running buck as it passed within 20 feet of me if it had been legal, even with



the scope set on three power, as the field of view was just too narrow for such close range. As much as I like that beautiful rifle, it was not going to get the job done. Time to go to plan B if I'm going to put meat on the table, I thought.

Plan B involved changing to my lucky hunting hat, still-hunting through several thick areas where I frequently spot deer and, most importantly, taking out for the first time my open-sighted lever action .30-30.

Such a rifle is not for everyone, but it does quite well for many people under most circumstances. It is often criticized by those who use rifles that are louder and hit harder downrange. It is often erroneously dismissed as a beginner's or kid's gun. It is considered by many to be antiquated and even next to useless by the less informed. It is not a hotshot, ballistically speaking, and is, well, rather boring as a cartridge. It usually is not a tackdriver cartridge either, but it has a wonderful reputation on whitetails out to 150 yards. It is easier on the shoulder than my .30-06, and although it's not a cartridge for reaching across a 300-yard field to nail a deer, it has plenty of power to down deer or bears under most conditions — namely, well inside of 100 yards — here in Pennsylvania.

Although, as recounted later in this story, my shooting opportunities were at a longer range, generally in my neck of the woods shooting at whitetails often occurs within 60 yards, and frequently half that distance. A "beanfield magnum" with a 6-18x scope would be a poor choice for most of my type of hunting. An accurate rifle of adequate power that fits you like a good upland bird gun is a better choice, and the open-sighted Winchester 94 is just the ticket for me.

The open sights are ideal for bad weather, when visibility is limited, and a bit of plastic wrap and a rubber band keep snow and freezing rain out of the muzzle. My particular Model 94 is 74 years old and belonged to my grandfather and then my father. The wood is not fancy and is scratched, and the bluing is worn off in places, but the gun has a certain grace to it, and the slim receiver begs to be carried in one hand all day long. It has the old style sights, adjustable for windage only by drifting the rear sight. It shot low, though, so I filed down the square front sight blade so that it now hits right on with Remington 170-grain Core-Lokts. At a mere 6½ pounds, the rifle flies to my shoulder, the sights line up automatically, and it tracks on a moving target like radar.

Quick is important in the deer woods, as I've found that the average time I get to check out a deer before it disappears is about three to seven seconds. Those hunting videos that show the hunter looking out over a field for 10 minutes before selecting a buck, and then coolly dispatching the trophy with one well placed shot from a scoped and rested rifle in a stand, just never happens for me, nor do I believe it happens for most Pennsylvania hunters. Open-sighted .30-30s are extremely quick.

Lever action .30-30s, Winchesters or Marlins, have a certain romantic appeal. The design goes back more than a century. These guns have been carried by generations of hunters, outdoorsmen and adventurers from, Maine to Alaska and beyond. They have seen tens of thousands of wilderness campfires, and if they could talk, many of the older ones would tell tales worthy of a Jack London novel, except they would be fact not fiction. They put rabbits and venison on the table during the Depression, and protected rural and frontier homes and farms from a variety of 4-legged and even 2-legged varmints.

With the 94 cradled in my arm, I still-hunted into a favorite thick stand of hemlocks and found one of my cousin's ladder stands. I decided to rest in the stand before continuing, and I immediately spotted movement out of the corner of my eye. It was a lone doe, and she was feeding and moving towards an even thicker area where a shot would be impossible. The range was about 80 yards, and at my shot she went right down. After tagging and field-dressing, the drag back to camp was easy, because she was small and there was plenty of snow. This will show Rande, I thought.

After getting back to camp I went up on top of our hill to use my cell phone to call home and share the good news. My wife and two children cheered in the phone. "Kill three, Daddy," my almost 6-year-old daughter Shannon yelled. She knew I had another antlerless license and, of course, a buck tag. She'll be a hunter someday, as I know my 8-year-old son Nathaniel will be.

I turned to walk back down our camp dirt road and there they were — five does. The lead doe was the largest and was standing broadside on the side of the road, silhouetted against the bright snow, looking right at me.

It was a long shot, about 130 yards, but I had spent plenty of time at the range and knew I could shoot tight groups at 100 yards. At the shot she jumped into cover and out of sight. I found her dead 30 yards from where she had been standing, hit through the lungs. A beautiful mature doe, she would feed my family all year.



Primitive is the only way to go, I thought, as I tagged and field-dressed the deer. Only 90 minutes had elapsed from when I had shot my first deer, and as I flung open the camp door, still cradling my 94, I said to my brother, "Primitive is the only way to go." For once, he didn't say a word, as he had yet to collect his second doe or a buck. I didn't want to put any pressure on him, but I was willing to lend him a real deer rifle. □

Cover Painting by Dwight Kirkland

YOU'RE POSTED at the edge of a swamp when you catch movement out of the corner of your eye. You slowly turn your head and can't believe your eyes. He's a big one; no question about meeting antler restrictions on this one, but you're banking that he'll stop at the edge of the marsh before bolting to the safety of the woods to get a standing shot, because it's too risky taking a shot at a bounding deer.

With this as the fourth year since the antler restrictions were put in place, big bucks like the one featured on this month's cover are more likely to be found than at any other time in our history. But these older bucks are wary; it's going to take some patience and some luck, but even if you don't fill your tag, have a safe and enjoyable season. Just being there is what counts.

FIELD NOTES

We Had To

BERKS — WES Dan Lynch did a great job instructing Southeast Region WCOs in the proper use of cable restraints, right up until he accidentally restrained himself. Yes, he was released unharmed as a non-target catch.

— WCO DAVE BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Glad You're Here

ERIE — It's been a year since Dave Myers retired and WCOs Chaybin, Allegro and I have been covering the Pymatuning district. Recently, though, WCO Piccirilli took over this district.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN



Porky Insurance?

FOREST — I noticed some campers who laid out a tarp, drove their van onto it and then secured it to the top of the vehicle. I just had to ask, and camper Michael Brown from Albion explained that the tarp prevented porcupines from damaging his vehicle, as he has had more than $8,000 in damages to his vehicles over the 10 years or so he has been camping in the area. Porcupines have gnawed everything from a plastic bumper cover on the front and insulation on the wiring to the license plate.

— WCO FRANK E. LEICHTENBERGER, TIONESTA

Third Time's a Charm

FRANKLIN — In 2002 I had the pleasure of a boat ride in a manure pit to rescue a trapped fox, and then this year I got another boat ride in a sediment pond at a quarry to rescue some Canada geese. I want to thank members of the Fayetteville Fire Company and Greene Township personnel who helped on this occasion. I've been fortunate that I've not fallen out of the boat on either trip. I sure hope it doesn't happen again.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Out of Range

NORTHAMPTON — "If looks could kill" was what Deputy Tom Harrington and I were thinking when a woman learned that her husband's 10-point buck was not taken during an exciting muzzleloader hunt in New York, but was a pen-raised deer from an illegal deer propagation operation in Pennsylvania. Fortunately, when she saw what her husband had paid for the deer, her stare was directed at her husband, and not at these WCOs.

— WCO Bradley D. Kreider, Cherryville

Tug-of-War

FAYETTE — I received a call to report to Jim and Judy Yanek's residence in Big Brownfield to see about a great horned owl perched on one of their outbuildings, with a leghold trap attached to its foot. I climbed atop an adjoining roof on a nearby shed and cautiously made my way across toward the owl. Just as I got close, the owl lifted off, with the trap still attached. Luckily, the trap had a long wire attached to it, and I was able to run after it and snag the wire, "reeling" the owl in. I freed the owl, which appeared none the worse for wear.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, UNIONTOWN

New Face

CRAWFORD — I'd like to welcome WCO Mario Piccirilli to Pymatuning. Mario transferred here from Forest County. While taking a brief tour of the district in August, he was amazed at the quality of habitat and abundance of wildlife. He's looking forward to his new assignment, and I'm looking forward to having another WCO here.

— LMO JERRY A. BISH, CONNEAUT LAKE



Makin' It Just Fine

BEDFORD — Several years ago retired WCO Tim Flanigan took a young bear that had been hit by a train to a local veterinarian, who had to amputate one of its legs. The bear recovered and was released back into the wild, and soon after received the name Boo-Boo from the locals. Then, last fall several hunters told me they had passed on the bruin during bear season. I've had several reports of the three-legged bear being sighted this summer, too.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Do Your Part

CENTRE — Reduced deer numbers and larger racked bucks seem to have caused more poaching at night than in prior years. If you see someone spotlighting after hours or during the regular firearms season or hear shots at night, try to get a vehicle license number or report the activity to the region office. Poachers steal game from law- abiding sportsmen.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, MADISONBURG

Real Danger

PERRY — Recently a family in Duncannon heard a commotion outside their door late one night and found a skunk attacking one of their several puppies. The skunk was dispatched and tested positive for rabies. I was later told that, unfortunately, all the puppies had to be destroyed, because they were too young to have received rabies shots and the owner couldn't identify the pup that had been attacked, being they all looked alike. The skunk was the 275th mammal in Pennsylvania to test positive for rabies this year. Two hundred eighteen of those were furbearers and 80 percent of those were raccoons.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Don't Try This

WESTMORELAND — You've always heard about the guy who would like to tie up his deer before the season. Well, Gene Raymond from Irwin recently did just that. A 9-point buck got its antlers caught in Gene's batting cage netting, and it took three of us holding the deer and cutting the netting to finally release it without doing any damage to the deer. Couldn't say the same for the netting, though.

— WCO RODNEY S. ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

Priorities

FULTON — A woman told my wife that quite a few years ago a classmate of her son's was asked to name the four seasons as part of a scholastic quiz. His answer: "buck season, doe season, turkey season and fishing season."

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, WATERFALL

Vindicated

SNYDER — I've been taking quite a ribbing about my Field Note in the October issue about nearly jumping out of my shoes when I looked down and spotted a rattlesnake that turned out to be dead near my feet. What wasn't mentioned was that although the snake was dead, it didn't know it yet and was still moving toward me.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINSGROVE



Read the Regulation Digest

SCHUYLKILL — Waterways Conservation Officer Chad Woleslagle and I talked to a father and his son who were taking a break on the first day of archery season. The father was a little agitated, stating that his 15-year-old son had a nice spike 10 yards away but had to pass because of antler restrictions. I informed him that junior hunters may take spikes, as long as one antler is at least three inches long. He looked at his son and said, "I hope you're not too mad at me."

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Fooled Him

SULLIVAN — The night before archery season I received information about an antlered deer in the bed of a pickup that was heading down a lane leading to a camp near Troy. After arriving at the camp, the truck's owner gladly showed me the deer. The small "buck" had four points, was quite stiff and made out of foam.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Reliable Force

BUTLER — Nearly 800 students in eight different HTE classes were certified in my district this year. It would not be possible to run these classes without the help of the many volunteer instructors who give so much of their time and talents to ensure that our hunting heritage is passed on. A tip of the hat to all the PGC volunteers.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

Took Note

GREENE — We were issued new rotating red and blue lights for our vehicles, which you'd think wouldn't be noticed by many people. After stopping an individual who was spotlighting after legal hours, I realized that it was the third time I cited him for the same offense. When I pointed this out to him, instead of the typical excuses, he said, "Hey, you got a different red light on your truck."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

"You Got Me!"

INDIANA — I don't know who put the life-sized 3D antlered moose target at the edge of the Mahoning Creek in Rochester Mills, but it definitely made me tap the brakes and take a second look. To whoever did it — Yeah, you got me!

— WCO PATRICK L. SNICKLES, MARION CENTER



Long in the Tooth

MCKEAN — At an HTE course at the Mount Jewett Sportsmen's Club a young student's father pointed out that two of the instructors had taught the course when he took it. Nothing unusual about that, except that he had taken the course 31 years ago, and instructors Dale Peterson and Dave Malone were 5-year veterans back then. These dedicated individuals are invaluable to preserving our hunting and trapping heritage.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT

Slip of the Tongue

ELK — One evening in September my 7-year-old daughter Ashley and I made our annual trip into the elk range to enjoy the sights and sounds of bull elk. Not only did we see elk and hear them bugling, but we also encountered deer, turkeys and even a bear. I told Ashley that we were lucky to see all four of the state's big game species. The next night my brother, retired WCO Denver McDowell, came up with his wife Vicki and they took Ashley and my wife Patty out looking for elk. When I got home that night Denver wanted to know why Ashley kept telling him that she and her dad had seen "all four game pieces."

— WCO DOTY A. MCDOWELL, ST. MARYS



Cut and Dried Corn and Case

INDIANA — Deputy Burns and I actually watched as a couple guys spread out bait under their treestands. We were close enough to even read the bags they were emptying — "deer corn."

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Dedicated Volunteers

CHESTER — After reviewing the end of the fiscal year time and activity reports for my nine deputies in northern Chester and all of Delaware County, the tally shows that they worked a combined 3,454 hours. A tip of my hat goes to all Game Commission deputies for their service to wildlife and the public.

— WCO SCOTT FREDERICK, SADSBURYVILLE

Good Outlook

JUNIATA — Scott Hess from TBA Tire in Lewistown told me that he has a new attitude this hunting season. With antler restrictions and a reduced deer herd in some areas, hunting has become more challenging, like, in sports, going up against a stronger team. To "win" more of these encounters hunters will have to work a little harder, scout a little more and put in more time. Anything worth having, though, is worth working for.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Opportunistic

TIOGA — It seems bears have learned that beaver dams offer a meal and often they dig into beaver lodges to try and catch one. Earlier this fall I was trapping nuisance beavers, and after a week had finally caught the last one. Unfortunately for the beaver, though, a bear showed up looking for a midnight snack and took my trap, beaver and all, under its front leg like it was carrying a lunch box.

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, WELLSBORO

A Big Concern

VENANGO — Due to budget cuts our public access cooperators no longer receive complimentary *Game News* and signs and seedlings. We do, however, still patrol these areas, and for this reason, despite the cuts, I was able to sign up some new cooperators. The number one concern of these property owners is people riding ATVs through their fields.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Give Them Some Time

MIFFLIN — It's the end of the month and another Field Note is due, as I sit looking at the blinking curser on my computer screen. I think about last month, but nothing out of the ordinary has happened, just a bear in downtown Lewistown and some littering violations. None of my neighboring officers have done anything embarrassing lately either. Sometimes you just can't come up with anything original.

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Not in the Bird ID Book

CRAWFORD — One day this summer, during my first week after transferring here to the Pymatuning district, I noticed a large white hawk soaring just above a cornfield. I knew the bird had too much white to be a harrier and knew it wasn't a snowy owl at this time of year. Later on that evening I was on patrol with Deputy John Ittel and mentioned the sighting to him, and he replied, "Oh, you saw the albino redtail that everyone comes up here to see."

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, MARIENVILLE

Made My Day

CENTRE — I was working our PGC display during Penn State Ag days when a young man stopped by and shook my hand and thanked me for the great job we did with an HTE course he had taken in the summer at the Scotia Range. He explained that he had put in countless hours scouting for deer and couldn't wait for the season to begin.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Resourceful

WARREN — I witnessed a coyote pup feeding on something in the yard of a vacant camp, so I stopped the truck to watch. The pup was pouncing upon and eating one grasshopper after another. I knew grasshoppers were a summertime staple food for many types of birds, but now I know the protein-rich insect is appealing to canines as well.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, PITTSFIELD

Should Have Listened

DAUPHIN — HTE Instructor Harold Daub and his brother, Rusty, bought new foam-padded climbing treestands. When they set them up just prior to archery season, Harold suggested that Rusty place his a little higher to protect it from bears. Rusty didn't think it would be a problem, though, and left it where it was. Sure enough, when Rusty checked his stand the day before deer season, a bear had chewed it up.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN



Drummin' Up Business

ALLEGHENY — State Representative Marc Gergley hosted a Senior Citizen Expo in McKeesport in September, and along with many businesses invited the Game Commission. Deputy Rege Denne helped me in answering the many questions we had all day, and while we had a break, a man approached and handed us pens. When he handed the pen to Rege he said, "I'll see you soon." Rege got a little upset when he read what was on the pen and realized it was from a funeral home.

— WCO BETH A. FIFE, SOUTH PARK

Fooled Ya

LEHIGH — After capturing a nuisance bear I mentioned to Deputy Rob Bertoni (who had never processed a bear before) that the animal seemed particularly docile. I administered the drug and after 10 minutes the bear appeared to be sedated, but was still able to pick up its head, so I administered another, smaller dose, and that seemed to put the bear out. I checked by rattling the trap and jostling the bruin's head with the jab stick, without any reaction. We raised the trap door and Rob asked if the bear was out. I said that she was out or really good at playing 'possum. When I reached into the trap to pull the bear out, though, it got up and ran out between our legs and into the woods. Rob said it was the biggest opossum he'd ever seen.

— WCO M.P. TEEHAN, FOGELSVILLE

Preliminary approval given to 2006-07 seasons and bags

A NEW FORMAT for setting seasons and bag limits was initiated when the Board of Game Commissioners at its October meeting gave preliminary approval to the seasons and bag limits for 2006-07. In turn, these proposals will be up for final adoption at the January 2006 meeting. Traditionally, seasons and bag limits were proposed in January and given final adoption in April.

This earlier timetable is designed to give hunters and trappers more lead time to make vacation and other plans, and to give agency staff more time to get the regulations through the regulatory process and to prepare the hunting and trapping digest.

Public comments on these proposals will be received up until the next Board meeting, Jan. 22-24. On Sunday, Jan. 22, at 1 p.m., public comments will be taken. On Jan. 23, beginning at 8:30 a.m., the Board will receive staff reports. On Jan. 24, at 8:30 a.m., the Board will begin voting on the meeting agenda. All meetings are open to the public.

Also at the October meeting, the Board gave final approval to remove the deadline for purchasing a "muzzleloader license." As a result, there is no muzzleloader license deadline for the ongoing 2005-06 license year.

Deer seasons to remain largely unchanged for 2006-07

As proposed, the 2006-07 deer season framework remains essentially the same as the previous four years.

- Antler restrictions will continue.
- Archery seasons will be Sept. 30-Nov. 11, and Dec. 26-Jan. 12.
- A muzzleloader season for antlerless deer, Oct.14-21. The flintlock muzzleloader season, Dec. 26-Jan. 13.
- A firearms antlerless deer season, Oct. 19-21.
- A concurrent antlered/antlerless regular firearm season, Nov. 27-Dec. 9.
- Antlerless deer hunting in WMU 2B , Dec. 26-Jan.13.
- Antlerless deer hunting in WMUs 5C and 5D, Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 27.

Antlerless deer license allocations will be set at the April meeting, after staff has evaluated the 2005-06 deer harvest figures.

The use of crossbows will be permitted for hunting elk, and bear and deer during any of the firearms seasons.

Statewide, hunters using crossbows during the early muzzleloader season or late flintlock season must have a muzzleloader stamp, in addition to a general hunting license and WMU antlerless deer license. However, hunters using a crossbow during the late flintlock season will be allowed to take an antlered deer or an antlerless deer anywhere in the state, with their unused antlered deer tag, just like other late-season flintlock hunters.

In WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D, hunters planning to use a crossbow during the archery seasons must purchase an ar-

chery stamp in addition to their general hunting license and appropriate WMU antlerless deer license.

Archery bear season

In addition to the traditional 3-day statewide bear season (Nov. 20-22, 2006) before Thanksgiving, and a bear season concurrent with the first week of the firearms deer season (Nov. 27-Dec. 2, 2006) for WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E — where human/bear conflicts are the greatest — the Board also proposed a 2-day archery bear season for WMUs 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 4A, 4B and 4D for Nov. 15-16, 2006.

Expanded elk season continued

The 2006-07 elk seasons proposed include a late September 2007 hunt — like the September 2006 hunt set as part of the 2005-06 seasons. The September elk seasons are set specifically to help farmers with crop damage problems, and they're set outside the normal, July through June season and bag limit framework, to accommodate the elk license application and drawing process.

Crossbows for turkeys

The Board gave preliminary approval to a proposal to allow turkey hunters to use crossbows. If approved in January, hunters will be allowed to use crossbows as early as the 2006 spring gobbler season.

Steps taken to protect state from CWD

With the recent approval of Pennsylvania's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan, the Board approved a measure that grants certain emergency authorities to the executive director to prevent the spread of CWD, if it's found in or near the state or poses a serious threat to the commonwealth's deer and elk.

The new regulation allows the executive director to prohibit the feeding of deer in defined containment areas, and to ban the importation of high-risk deer or elk parts, such as the lymph nodes, brain and spinal cord.

"While current state laws and regulations prohibit the feeding of elk and bears, we recognize that many people enjoy feeding other wildlife, and we do not anticipate prohibiting those activities unless or until CWD poses a threat here," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director.

Ross noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, with the support of the Game Commission, issued an order to ban the importation of specific carcass parts from states and Canadian provinces that have a history of CWD in free-ranging deer populations, except for West Virginia, where the ban is only for parts from Hampshire County, and New York, where a state ban there prohibits the removal of specific parts from its CWD containment area.

E&T species lists updated

The bald eagle has been moved from the state's endangered species list to the threatened list, based on its ongoing recovery here. On the other hand, the dickcissel, sedge wren and yellow-bellied flycatcher, all listed as threatened species for years, were elevated to endangered status, as were the black-crowned night heron and blackpoll warbler, which had been "species of special concern."

"It's satisfying that bald eagles are once again flourishing in the commonwealth," noted John Riley, Board president. "Their comeback represents an amazing wildlife management success story, one we all should be proud of. But there is still the somber reality that we just added five new species to the state endangered list. It's clear that much more work needs to be done.

Unfortunately, insufficient funding continues to severely limit the agency's ability to address the needs of all wildlife."

The number of nests in Pennsylvania black-crowned night heron colonies has been declining for years. This spring, the number of nests found on the Susquehanna River's Wade Island — the state's largest black-crowned colony — was only 63, less than half of the 128 found in 2004.

In Pennsylvania, blackpoll warblers nest only in a very localized area of western Wyoming County. They've nested in this area for at least the past 11 years, with no more than 14 breeding pairs ever documented. The blackpoll was added to the state endangered species list because of its low population and limited range.

Sedge wrens, dickcissels and yellow-bellied flycatchers were all elevated to "endangered" from "threatened," to reflect the agency's growing concern for the welfare of these birds.

"Species of greatest conservation concern will continue to receive the best attention the agency can provide," noted Dan Brauning, Wildlife Diversity Section supervisor. "But it's recognized that some, such as the black-crowned night heron, aren't likely to experience significant population gains anytime soon."

The endangered species changes made by the Commissioners were recommended by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey's Ornithological Technical Committee.

Important wildlife projects approved

The Board approved three projects for Pennsylvania's species of special concern, to be funded primarily under the USFWS's State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG), with private organizations financing the matching portion of the projects' overall costs. The research projects are:

Important Mammal Areas Project — Emphasis on Stewardship: This $69,190 project is being undertaken by the National Wildlife Federation, and will continue to develop a stewardship plan for Chestnut Ridge/Laurel Ridge Important Mammal Area 10, as well as complete six more of the remaining IMA assessments.

Assessing the Population Status and Habitat Requirements of the Least Shrew in Southcentral Pennsylvania: This $41,200 project, headed by The Nature Conservancy, aims to determine the population status of the least shrew, a state endangered species, and potential habitat. The project also will attempt to assess the current distribution of barn owls in Pennsylvania, as well as woodland usage of Indiana bats (a state and federally listed endangered species) at the Gettysburg National Battlefield.

Vertebrates of Special Concern in Pennsylvania: A Guide for Research,

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Conservation and Management: This $38,000 project being undertaken by Wilkes University will lead to the publication of a technical guide on Pennsylvania's rare, threatened and endangered vertebrates. It will feature detailed accounts of each species, as well as range maps and research and management recommendations, a statewide habitat overview, priority sites, and statewide management and conservation priorities.

Recreational spotlighting restrictions proposed

The Board gave preliminary approval to extending the ban on recreational spotlighting during the regular firearms deer seasons to include the late firearms deer seasons in WMUs 2B, 5C and 5D. Since 1987, spotlighting has been prohibited from 11 p.m. on the day before the opening of the regular antlered/antlerless deer season to the day after the seasons close.

Because additional firearms hunting seasons have been established in the state's urban/suburban WMUs, the regulation was amended to prohibit spotlighting during these extended or late seasons. The change, if approved, will make spotlighting unlawful during any rifle/shotgun season in WMU 2B, 5D and 5D that occurs after the 2-week antlered/antlerless season. The remainder of the state will be unaffected.

In other action, the Board:

- proposed to increase the fee for taking the PGC taxidermy exam from $50 to $300, due at application submission. In addition, the Board set a retake fee of $50 for any part of the exam that isn't completed by the applicant. An additional $100 shall be paid for the permit if the applicant passes his or her examination.
- proposed a regulatory change sought by predator hunters that will allow furbearer hunters to use up to #4 buckshot.
- proposed to require any hunter who purchases a "special wild turkey license" (to hunt for a second spring gobbler) to complete and submit a report card, whether or not they harvest a bird. This information will be used to assess the impacts and effectiveness of the new license.
- proposed to eliminate the regulation that makes individuals who fail to submit a DMAP harvest report card ineligible to receive a DMAP license in subsequent years. DMAP permits holders, however, will still be required to submit a harvest report card for each DMAP license they may have, whether or not it's used to take a deer.
- proposed to allow hunters and trappers to apply over-the-counter at agency offices for elk licenses, special wild turkey licenses, bobcat permits, and DMAP harvest permits.
- proposed to allow licensed furtakers to take possession of furbearers killed on Pennsylvania's highways throughout the year. All highway-killed furbearers picked up by licensed furtakers outside of hunting and/or trapping seasons for that species will have to be reported to the Game Commission within 24 hours. The measure was proposed to reduce the waste of a

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

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valuable resource.

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal that clarifies that the 6-person hunting party limit for small game hunters doesn't apply to waterfowl or dove hunters when hunting from blinds or other stationary positions.
- proposed to expand the falconry examination period from just the month of May to a 6-month period (Jan. 1 to June 30), to make taking the test more convenient for apprentice falconers.
- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal that will allow property owners to obtain a depredation permit to take, under certain conditions, threatened or endangered birds that are causing economic loss or to protect their property.

Board approves acquisition of more than 1,360 acres

The Board approved three proposals that will increase the State Game Lands system by more than 1,360 acres.

Clarion County: the purchase of 453 acres from the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife for $161,860, with a 50 percent Federal-State Wildlife Grant reimbursement. This parcel will become part of SGL 330, and is the third purchase of what is commonly known as the "Piney Tract." The Board approved the first purchase, nearly 965 acres, in January, and the second, more than 836 acres, in June.

The Piney Tract is particularly significant because it's home for large populations of grassland-associated animals, from various game species, such as ring-necked pheasants, rabbits, ruffed grouse and wild turkey, to several species of special concern, such as the Henslow's sparrow, short-eared owl and upland sandpiper.

Erie County: a 53.75-acre indenture into SGL 109 from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for $9,400. The tract is predominately wetlands, with about 13 acres of woodland and seven acres of reverting farmland. The western edge of the property borders State Route 97.

Schuylkill County: a 600-acre parcel adjoining SGL 329, from the Municipal Authority of the Borough of Shenandoah for $205,000.

Armstrong County: a donation of 256 acres from E.S. Dewey, Trustee, Dewey Family Trust. With the Allegheny River forming its northern boundary, the adquisition of this property will protect about 4,000-feet of riparian habitat. The tract will become an unattached part of SGL 105. The Trust reserves the right to cut and remove timber within one year of the conveyance of the property, and also retains all gas and oil rights, and certain rights to enter the property to explore for and conduct gas and oil operations.

With these actions, the Board has approved the acquisition of more than 48,900 acres of State Game Lands since July 1, 1999, when the last license fee increase went into effect.

Share Your Harvest

Looking for a deer processor participating in the Pennsylvania "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" program? Go to the Game Commission website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "Hunting & Trapping," then in the hunter Information section, click on "Hunters Sharing the Harvest," then scroll down to the "participating deer processors" link.

Mining lease in Centre County approved

The Board approved a surface mining and reclamation lease with Warren C. Hartman Contracting of Clearfield, involving a 111-acre portion of SGL 100. The operation will impact about 51 acres for the actual mining and 60 acres for reclamation, erosion and sedimentation controls and operation support. The project will include the reclamation of about 7,470 feet of abandoned highwall, and reclaim 20 acres of abandoned mine spoils. The value of the reclamation is estimated to be $288,500.

In exchange, Hartman Contracting will pay the Game Commission, on a monthly basis, a coal royalty rate of $2.50 or 12 percent of the pit price, whichever is greater, for each marketable ton of coal removed from the lease area. Hartman Contracting will pay an advanced royalty payment of $100,000 upon the final execution of the lease and the issuance of a mining permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection. The lease has a potential royalty value of $585,000.

Input sought on bear and turkey management plans

THE Game Commission is seeking public input on draft management plans for bears and wild turkeys. Both can be reviewed on the agency's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, by clicking the bear management plan and wild turkey management plan icons in the center of the homepage.

"We are seeking public comment to ensure that the thoughts and concerns of Pennsylvanians about these big game species are considered for the final plans," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management director. "As written, these plans are science-based, progressive and promote responsible management. We're interested in hearing from those who would like to offer comments on these drafts, to see if we've missed something or if they share our management visions for the future."

Comments can be e-mailed directly from each plan's respective website, or mailed to the addresses noted below and on the website, and will be accepted until Dec. 9, via e-mail or by mail to: Bear Management Plan or Turkey Managment plan, Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Remember to send in your harvest report card

If you've taken any deer (or a turkey) this season, be sure to send in your harvest report card. If you've already used — or lost — the report cards provided with your hunting license package, see page 33 of this year's hunting and trapping digest for an acceptable facsimile.

The information provided on report cards is used to measure harvest and population trends and, ultimately, help the agency provide the best hunting opportunities possible. So, this year, do your part: Remember to send in a harvest report card for every deer (and turkey) you take.

Three resolutions approved:

License fee increase

THE BOARD unanimously approved a resolution offered by Game Commissioner Russell E. Schleiden that urges both the House and Senate to take immediate action to address the financial needs of the Pennsylvania Game Commission on behalf of the commonwealth's wildlife resources, citizens and rich hunting and trapping heritage.

"Hunting license fees have been increased only twice in the past 25 years," Schleiden said. "The last license fee increase took effect on July 1, 1999. Since that time, the cost of doing business has increased significantly for everyone, including the Game Commission.

"Hunting licenses remain the primary source of funding for support of Pennsylvania's wildlife management programs, and the last fee increase was only enough to offset the then-current budget deficit, but not enough to allow for building the Game Fund reserve or for expanding services or programs."

Schleiden noted that the Game Commission has maintained expenditures at or near zero growth for the past four years, while being forced to reduce programs and services to hunters, trappers and the general public.

"Game Commission staff has produced for various legislative committees detailed and ongoing financial reports to support both past expenditures and the need for new and additional revenues for future programs and services," Schleiden said. "A coalition of sportsmen and conservation organizations unanimously support increased funding for the Game Commission."

Social Security Numbers

THE BOARD also unanimously approved a resolution offered by Game Commissioner Gregory Isabella that directs the Game Commission staff to continue working to remove the federal and state requirements that force the agency to collect Social Security Numbers from license buyers.

There are three components to Isabella's resolution. First, agency staff is asked to continue to seek a waiver from the Department of Public Welfare that would excuse the agency from having to collect Social Security Numbers from license buyers until the agency implements an electronic license sale system, commonly referred to as "point-of-sale."

Second, the Game Commission's staff is asked to continue to pursue Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross' initiative to have the U.S. Congress and the state General Assembly each enact legislation to remove the Game Commission from being required to collect Social Security Numbers.

And, third, the Game Commission staff is directed to give license buyers' Social Security Numbers the highest degree of security and confidentiality, and purge the information from license records as soon as legally possible.

"It must be clearly understood that collecting Social Security Numbers from our license buyers was not something the Game Commission wanted to do or

asked to be responsible for," Isabella emphasized. "As an agency, we must continue to pursue all means possible to be removed from this requirement."

Background: Congress, in the mid-1990s, enacted a number of new laws to improve enforcement of child support obligations. As part of the broad welfare reform effort, states were required to implement requirements to encourage payment of child support. States that failed to implement these requirements faced possible loss of federal welfare funds. In response to this new federal law, the Pennsylvania General Assembly, in 1997, enacted legislation to implement the new federal requirements.

In March, the Department of Public Welfare instructed the Game Commission that it was required to enforce those two laws. Since then, Ross initiated a request for waiver from the department until an electronic license sale system is put in place, as the current paper license sale system does little to accomplish the goals of the federal and state laws.

In late July, Ross launched an informational effort with Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation and Pennsylvania House and Senate Game and Fisheries committee chairmen to seek legislative relief from the requirement.

Mentored youth program

THE BOARD unanimously approved a resolution offered by Game Commissioner Gregory Isabella, giving a vote of confidence to the Mentored Youth Hunting Program, which is designed to allow youngsters under 12 years of age a chance to gain hunting experience.

Under the Mentored Youth Hunting Program concept, the mentor will need to meet certain requirements and the young hunter must be considered "ready" by the parent or legal guardian. A hunt will consist of one adult at least 21 years old and one youth, and they may have only one hunting device with them, and it must be carried by the mentor while in transit. The youth must be within arm's length of the mentor at all times.

"The purpose of this program is to encourage youngsters to enter the realm of hunting," Isabella said. "The time that can be shared between a youth and a mentor is invaluable. There simply is no better way to introduce a young person to the safe, ethical and responsible aspects of hunting than with the close supervision of an adult mentor that this program creates.

"Today, we all seem to have less and less time, and we never seem to place the proper value on the truly important things. There can be no greater way to instill values, and provide the ideal time and place to teach conservation, respect, ethics and the responsibilities that we all have as caretakers of our streams and forests, than by adopting a Youth Mentored Hunting Program in Pennsylvania."

The committee of organizations promoting the Mentored Youth Hunting Program are the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, the National Rifle Association, the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Pass It On Program, the Quality Deer Management Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance.

Proposed 2006-07 Hunting Seasons

Proposed bag limits are unchanged from previous years.

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license — Oct. 7-13

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Fall Season — Oct. 14-Nov. 25; Late Seasons — Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 3.

Ruffed Grouse: Oct. 14-Nov. 25, Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 27. No open season in the portion of SGL 176 posted "RESEARCH AREA — NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (Cottontail): Oct. 21-Nov. 25, Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 3.

Pheasant: Junior hunters, with or without required license — Oct. 7-13. Male pheasants only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D. Male and female pheasants may be taken in all other WMUs.

Pheasant: Male only in WMUs 2A, 2B, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D — Oct. 21-Nov. 25. Male and female in WMUs 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4A, 4B and 4D — Oct. 21- Nov. 25, Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Feb. 3.

Bobwhite Quail: Oct. 21-Nov. 25. (Closed in WMUs 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D.)

Hares (Snowshoe Rabbits) Or Varying Hares: Dec. 26-Jan. 1.

Crows: July 1-Nov. 25 and Dec. 29-April 1, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. **Wild Turkey (male or female):** Wildlife Management Units 1A and 1B (Shotgun and bow and arrow) — Oct. 28-Nov. 11; WMU 2A and 2B (Shotgun and bow and arrow) — Oct. 28-Nov. 18; WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B, and 4D — Oct. 28-Nov. 11; WMUs 2D, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E — Oct. 28-Nov. 18; WMUs 5A and 5B — CLOSED TO FALL TURKEY HUNTING; and WMUs 5C and 5D (Shotgun and bow and arrow) — Oct. 28-Nov. 3.

Spring Gobbler (bearded bird only): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with required license — April 21, 2007. Only 1 spring gobbler may be taken during this hunt.

Spring Gobbler (bearded bird only): April 28-May 26, 2007. Daily limit 1, season limit 2. (Second spring gobbler may be taken only by persons who possess a valid special wild turkey license.)

Black Bear (WMUs 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 4A, 4B and 4D) Bow and Arrow only: Nov. 15-16.

Black Bear (Statewide): Nov. 20-22.

Black Bear (WMUs 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E): Nov. 27-Dec. 2.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Nov. 6-11. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Sept. 17-22, 2007. Only one elk may be taken during the license year.

Deer, Archery (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Sept. 30-Nov. 11 and Dec. 26-Jan. 12.

Deer (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Nov. 27-Dec. 9.

Antlerless Deer (Statewide): Oct. 19-21. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled

Person Permit (to use a vehicle) Holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, with required antlerless license. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless muzzleloader (Statewide): Oct. 14-21. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlered or Antlerless Flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 13. One antlered deer per hunting license year, or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless (WMUs 2B): Dec. 26-Jan. 13. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless (WMUs 5C and 5D): Dec. 11-23 and Dec. 26-Jan. 27. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Proposed 2006-07 Furbearer Hunting Seasons

Coyotes: No closed season. Unlimited. Outside of any deer or bear season, coyotes may be taken with a hunting license or a furtakers license, and without wearing orange. During any archery deer season, coyotes may be taken while lawfully hunting deer or with a furtaker's license. During the regular firearms deer and any bear seasons, coyotes may be taken while lawfully hunting deer or bear, or with a furtaker's license while wearing 250 square inches of fluorescent orange. During the spring gobbler season, may be taken by persons who have valid tag and meet fluorescent orange and shot size requirements.

Raccoon & Foxes: Oct. 21-Feb. 17.

Opossum, Skunks & Weasels: No closed season, except for prior to noon during the spring gobbler season.

Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 21-Feb. 17. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Proposed 2006-07 trapping seasons

Mink & Muskrat: Nov. 18-Jan. 6.

Coyote, Foxes, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunks, Weasels: Oct. 22-Feb. 17.

Coyote & Foxes (Statewide) Cable Restraints: Jan. 1-Feb. 17. Participants must pass cable restraint certification course.

Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31 (Limits vary depending on WMU).

Bobcat (WMUs 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D): Oct. 22-Feb. 17. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Proposed 2006-07 falconry seasons

Squirrels (combined), Quail, Ruffed Grouse, Cottontail Rabbits, Snowshoe or Varying Hare, Ringneck Pheasant (male or female combined): Sept. 1-March 31.

No open season on other wild birds or mammals. Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird seasons will be established in accordance with Federal Regulations this summer.

Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

New Hampshire

Thanks to mandatory hunter education and widespread use of blaze orange clothing, hunting is safe and getting safer. The average annual number of hunting incidents dropped from 21 in the 1960s to just four in the current decade — and that's with 78,000 hunters in the state.

Remington

Remington Arms remains the largest firearms manufacturer in the U.S. for the third year in a row, leading in both the rifle and shotgun categories, according to data released by the BATF for 2003.

World's Best Bird Hunter?

English gentleman hunter Lord Ripon kept a meticulous tally of his game bag, and from 1867 to 1900, excluding big game and waterfowl he killed 2,218 woodcock, 2,769 snipe, 56,460 grouse 97,759 partridges and 142,343 pheasants.

North Dakota

In 2004, 2,272 rifle hunters took 1,865 pronghorn antelope, an 82 percent success rate, while 1,331 archery hunters tagged 213, a 16 percent success rate. Also in 2004, hunter success for bighorn sheep was 100 percent; moose, 86 percent; and elk, 46 percent.

Massachusetts

In 2004, eight deer were taken during the special season for paraplegic sportsmen, 3,016 during archery season, 6,682 during the shotgun season and 2,147 during the muzzleloader season, and an additional 413 taken at the Quabbin Reservation and on Nantucket, for a total of 12,266. Approximately 26 percent of the adult bucks taken were 3.5 years or older. Also, of the 294 samples taken from hunter and roadkilled deer in 2004, no evidence of CWD was detected.

West Virginia

In 2004 hunters harvested 179,066 deer, a 14 percent decline from 2003 and 19 percent less than the previous 5-year harvest average of 221,038. There were 63,873 antlered deer taken in the traditional bucks only firearms season. Archery hunters accounted for 26,227 deer, and during the muzzleloader season hunters took 15,104. Also, hunters took 1,235 bears during the combined archery and firearms seasons in 2004.

Wisconsin

Hunters took 518,630 deer during the 2004-05 seasons. Archery hunters took 103,571 and muzzleloaders 7,074 deer. The antlered deer harvest decreased by nearly 31 percent, while the antlerless harvest increased 52 percent and the total harvest increased nearly 20 percent from 2003.

Vermont

There were 954 turkeys taken by hunters in the fall of 2004, an increase of nearly 13 percent from 2003. Bear hunters also fared well, with 671 taken in 2004.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Just like with ice cream, Penns Woods has a variety of hunting "flavors" to choose from. The hard part is finding the time to sample everything.

Pick Your Flavor

PICK YOUR FLAVOR. Is it chocolate, vanilla, strawberry or something more daring? Perhaps butter pecan, raspberry swirl, cookie dough or mango sherbet. Or maybe it has a name that makes you buy out of curiosity, if not taste anticipation. Like "Superman," "Moose Tracks" or "Rocky Road." Or it reminds you of someone, like Penn State University Creamery's "Peachy Paterno" or Ben & Jerry's "Cherry Garcia."

If ice cream has 31 flavors, hunting in Pennsylvania must have that and many more.

Me? I'm not much for the edgy tastes, but I like variety. I'll take a bite of just about any flavor, but that doesn't mean I'll order it for myself next time. Or, I might even choose a double or triple-scoop, or mix it up a bit and perhaps discover a new "recipe" for myself.

When someone says to me, "So I understand you're a hunter," I know what they mean is that they've heard I'm a hunter. They don't know what kind of hunting I do, so they don't have a true understanding of me as a hunter. They don't know my flavor preferences or what I have or have not tried.

Maybe they think of me, the hunter, as someone who walks through pheasant fields behind a prancing setter. Or maybe they think of me as standing proudly with my rifle, beside a bear trophy. Actually, I've done the first rarely and the second not at all. Those flavors remain barely or never tasted.

When the list of too many ice cream choices blurs, I end up choosing mint chocolate chip as my guaranteed palate pleaser. If I had to pick one flavor of the hunt, it would be rifle deer hunting — in a vast and snowy woods. I know that whenever I get a lick of that, I will always say, "Yum."

Why is that my favorite flavor of hunting? Maybe like my ice cream standby, a day of rifle deer hunting brings a sort of minty taste to my senses, cold but soothing. White snow underfoot, deep blue sky overhead, green hemlock boughs all around. And, like the chocolate bits hidden in the ice cream, such a day has its own bittersweet reward: the deer that is killed that finishes the treat, or that gets away, leaving something for another day.

Pennsylvania hunting comes in so many varieties that we can scarcely sample them all. But like a kid who is given free run of the ice cream store, we can try a spoonful here, dip a scoop there, until we're satiated . . . or until the sweet tooth aches again.

What's your favorite hunting flavor? When I'm yearning for more than mint chocolate chip, I need go no farther than my gun closet.

Hmmm. What am I hungry for today?



Bob Steiner

Savoring the shot. Although LINDA rarely gets a taste of woodcock hunting with a dog, friends JOE BRANCATO SR. and JR. treated her last fall.

Hunting has seasonal specials, of course; they don't churn all the flavors all the time. I scan the choices and my eye falls on my inline muzzleloader. It's an autumn day and that season has just opened. What could be more delicious?

I nearly salivate at the thought of a hazy mid-month morning, the maples yellow and red, the beech gone gold, the oaks browning nicely. A wild-food bounty is underfoot and all around me, in acorns, beechnuts, hickory nuts, the fruits of the cucumbertree and the wild grape and the cherry. The whole outdoors is literally bursting with flavor. Getting a shot with my frontloader at a doe would be the cherry atop the sundae.

What about mixing the flavors? Stirring them up a bit? Creating a new concoction?

During a certain time of year, I could hunt with my bow, say, in the morning; with my rimfire squirrel rifle at midday; go shotgunning for grouse after lunch; and wait in a deer stand with my muzzleloader just before sunset. What a super-size portion that would be!

But then, such a mixture might not provide the best appreciation of all of those different flavors. There's not enough of each to enjoy them properly, and they may not blend together as pleasingly as I might hope. Maybe I should savor them one day at a time or, at most, make it a 2-dip treat. I can carry small game type arrows with me when I go archery deer hunting and wear enough fluorescent orange that I'm legal when I take the blunt shaft out of the quiver and shoot at squirrels.

I've hit only a couple of bushytails that way, but in the early archery season, when the grays and fox squirrels are so preoccupied with nut finding and burying that they scarcely notice me still-hunting past, I've had numerous shots. This makes a nice shooting break during the middle part of the day, when deer action is slow. Morning and evening, when I'm hunting seriously from a treestand, squirrels are "home free," because I don't want to spook approaching deer. A taste of two kinds of archery sport, to be sure, but each serving distinct enough to be relished.

Some types of hunting have one base flavor, plus add-ins. Like starting with chocolate ice cream and mixing in marshmallows and peanuts, almonds and coconut, or walnuts, fudge or caramel. Turkey hunting is like that. A hunter can choose a dish of "plain," without the toppings. Go after a fall bird, with a standard 12-gauge. Still plenty good and satisfying.

But you might try nibbling at another variety. Maybe you'll like it; maybe you won't. Where legal, sample turkey hunting with a rifle, making it both a calling and a marksmanship sport. Or flush them and shoot for a change, if shotgunning is your game and the circumstances allow. Spring birds more to your liking? Call one to a smoothbore muzzleloader or to a bow. And, coming soon, a new taste treat: Cross-

bows have been tentatively approved for future turkey hunts.

I haven't partaken of some hunting flavors for quite a while. Seems like the last few years my summers were so full of other activities, work or commitments that I didn't practice with my compound enough to feel confident about going out with a bow. I'm getting hungry for that again.

Lately, I've not gone often after pheasants, grouse and other flying gamebirds. I was treated to a woodcock hunt with a setter last fall, and that helped me remember how yummy such gunning can be. Maybe I'll get my order in early, this year, to my friend with the setter, for another delicious dishful.

Then there's bear and varmint hunting, snowshoe hares and waterfowl, treats I've hardly touched. Yet they are right up there on the menu and there's plenty left to go around. Yes, some are a "special order," in that I have to buy a stamp or permit, but I generally order a "full-meal deal" with my Pennsylvania hunting license purchase, anyway.

I haven't even considered what delicacies are available out of state, or out of the country. Moose and caribou, chukars and sharptails, Osceola and Merriam's turkeys, Colorado mulies and Columbia blacktails. Kudu, gemsbok, boar. Elk, both here and afar. Some are to be had only in small batches, because limited permits are available. But oh, they say, how lip-smackin' good when that dessert is served. ☐

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Ever wonder about the origin of the Christmas tree tradition? Well, its roots reach back to ancient times.

Eternal Evergreens

NOW THAT the deciduous trees have shed their leaves, the woods seem bare and dreary. Maybe that's why I spend much of the winter down in the hollow among the hemlocks or up in the Norway spruce grove. Both offer shelter and comfort on the coldest, bleakest, winter days.

The birds and other animals, too, seek refuge in the evergreen groves. The spruces fill up with dozens of dark-eyed juncos every evening, along with a roosting ruffed grouse or two and a pair of northern cardinals. Porcupines and deer leave piles of their telltale scat and signs of browsed spruce branches and gnawed bark. In the hemlocks I often find foraging black-capped chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches and golden-crowned kinglets.

When my eyes hunger for the sight of green after months in a mostly black and white world, I am also comforted by thousands of mountain laurel shrubs bearing shining evergreen leaves that gleam in the winter sunshine. Overhanging our stream or halfway up Laurel Ridge on Rhododendron Trail, the large, leathery, green leaves of rhododendron roll themselves into green cylinders during the bitter cold.

Walking miles along Laurel Ridge Trail, I stop to admire the scraggly beauty of occasional pitch pine trees growing among the leafless oaks. Lower down on the mountain I encounter here and there a tall, stately white pine tree along Short Circuit Trail or beside our access road down the hollow.

Most of these evergreen trees and shrubs have been used to deck our home at Christmastime. Heavy winter winds usually prune a few white pine and hemlock boughs that we gather to lay on the mantelpiece and windowsills. For many years a Norway spruce did duty first as our Christmas tree, and then, outside below the birdfeeders, as shelter and a landing post for the birds. Once, our son Dave even cut a mountain laurel shrub to use as a tree. But we all agreed that although it looked elegant, gleaming with Christmas lights, it wasn't nearly large enough to hold our collection of ornaments, including white pine cones our sons painted when they were children.

Unlike most folks today, we still decorate our tree on Christmas Eve and take it down shortly after New Year's Day. By then our greens have shed their needles and the tree is brittle, despite standing in water. Our Christmas Eve tradition began as a way to keep our three little sons occupied. I had them scheduled from morning, when we made gingerbread men to hang on the tree along with all the other ornaments, through the afternoon when they took presents over to our neighbor Margaret and serenaded her with Christmas carols on

their autoharp and she, in turn, told them stories about the mountain, until evening when we had a little Christmas Eve service around the tree — reading the Christmas story from Matthew and Luke, listening to a record of "The Night Before Christmas" that their paternal grandmother made them, and singing Christmas carols in a room lit only by flickering candles.

Long after they reached the age of reason, they followed the same pattern and expect, even now, if they come for the holidays, to put the tree up on Christmas Eve. Last Christmas, with only the three of us, our son Dave insisted on a tree and all the trimmings, on the greens and crèche figures on the mantelpiece, and on the candles in the windows.

The tradition of using evergreens during the darkest days of the year predates Christmas by many centuries. During Saturnalia, a celebration honoring Saturnus, the god of agriculture, Romans exchanged tree branches with friends as good luck symbols. As part of this mid-December, 7-day celebration of the winter solstice, the Romans closed their schools, fought no war or battle, nor punished anyone. Slaves sat down with their masters and were free to say whatever they liked and to drink and gamble, which were ordinarily forbidden. All social classes exchanged gifts, especially candles and clay dolls, the latter mostly given to children. Tree boughs and garlands adorned their homes, temples and idols, and in processions they carried trees decorated with flaming candles that were symbolic of the sun's return in spring.

Christians adopted many of those traditions in their own celebration of Christmas over the centuries. By the 18th century at least one English church was so filled with greens that British essayist Sir Richard Steele, in his 1712 periodical *The Spectator*, wrote "The middle aisle is a very pretty shady walk, and the pews look like so many arbours on each side of it . . . "

Evergreen shrubs and trees were symbols of eternal life to many people, because they didn't seem to die during the winter, and legends about their longevity led to the custom of Christmas trees. The Germans were particularly fond of them and the first documented evidence of Christmas trees surfaced in the notes of an anonymous citizen of Strasburg, France (then part of Germany), in 1605, who wrote, "At Christmas, they set up fir trees in the parlors . . . and hang thereon roses cut out of many colored papers, apples, wafers, gold-foil sweets, etc."

Legend has it that the German Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther, walking home through the forest one Christmas Eve around 1500, was entranced by the sight of stars shining through the trees and, to show his family the beauty of what he had seen, cut down a fir tree, brought it inside, and put lit candles on it to represent the stars over Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Here in the United States, the first record of a Christmas tree was in the German Moravian Church's settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1747. Instead of a cut tree, though, it was a wooden pyramid covered with evergreen branches and decorated with candles. At first the custom spread mostly among German settlers in eastern Pennsylvania, but it gradually became fashionable throughout the eastern United States by the middle of the 19th century. In 1851 the first Christmas tree lot was started by Mark Carr, who hauled balsam fir trees from his land in the Catskill Mountains to sell in New York City.

But that same year, in Cleveland, Ohio, when Pastor Henry Schwan set a Christmas tree up in his church, many parishioners called it a pagan custom and threatened to attack him. Undeterred by their threats, he thoroughly researched the origins of the Christmas tree, introducing historical written approval by such Christian heavyweights as Pope Gregory I and St. Augustine. The following year his parishioners accepted both Pastor Schwan and his Christmas tree.

By the end of the century, so many Americans cut Christmas trees that conservationists complained the custom would deplete the forests. President Teddy Roosevelt even banned the White House Christmas tree, which had been a tradition since 1856 when President Franklin Pierce had trimmed one for a group of Washington Sunday School children. Two of Roosevelt's sons rebelled and secretly smuggled a tree inside while appealing to



their father's friend, Gifford Pinchot, head of the United States Forest Service, for help. Pinchot, a trained forester (and later governor of Pennsylvania) told Roosevelt that careful and selective cutting could actually help the forests, so Roosevelt relented.

Today most live Christmas trees are cut on tree farms especially managed for the Christmas tree market. According to the National Christmas Tree Association, 46 million American households use artificial trees, 36 million still cut real trees, and 300,000 order live ones over the Internet. Of those who use real trees, 62 percent buy them from a retail lot and 23 percent from a tree farm. We have a tree farm not far from where we live and, because our Norway spruces are too tall now, go there to pick out a perfectly shaped tree, a process that can take hours of walking and discussing the merits of many trees as we move deeper into the snow-covered groves.

Of the 10 favorite Christmas tree species — Fraser fir, Douglas fir, balsam fir, Colorado blue spruce, Scotch pine, eastern red cedar, white spruce, eastern white pine, white or concolor fir and Virginia pine (in order of popularity) — four are native to Pennsylvania.

The eastern red cedar is traditional in the southern United States, but grows in Pennsylvania primarily in the southern counties. A denizen of old fields, it can reach a height of 100 feet or more in the limestone soils of eastern Tennessee and Kentucky. This tree takes on two different shapes. In the North and Midwest the shape is conical and "it is," Donald Culross Peattie wrote in his *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America*, "a favorite in old country graveyards, where, to the imagination of our forebears, perhaps, its finger seemed to point to heaven; its evergreen boughs spoke symbolically of life eternal." But farther south, the eastern red cedar spreads out and takes on a Christmas tree shape.

Virginia pine is another favorite southern Christmas tree and reaches only as far north as central Pennsylvania, Long Island and New Jersey. It grows in infertile areas, colonizing abandoned fields and the red clay hills of the piedmont. It's supposed to be the favorite Christmas tree in Virginia, probably because it forms pure groves there, as Peattie says, and is the commonest tree on Civil War battlefields — "its somber shapes, its elegiac sighing become fixed in the mind with these mournful places of glory."

The eastern white pine is the tallest pine east of the Mississippi River, and the second tallest in the world grows in Pennsylvania's own Cook Forest State Park. It likes moist settings, such as near

our stream, but will grow in drier, mountainous areas among deciduous trees. Because white pine saplings are a favorite food of white-tailed deer, we have none on our property except inside our deer exclosure. But white pines, in favorable settings, grow on average 16 inches a year and quickly gain the conical shape that Christmas tree growers like.

The balsam fir, such as Carr sold in his Christmas tree lot, is a tree mostly of the northern forests. A rarity in wild Pennsylvania, it grows in and along the edges of the cool swamps and bogs in the northern part of the state. Balsam fir twigs, more than other evergreen twigs, resemble crosses, which may be why balsam fir first became a favorite Christmas tree. In addition, the word "balsam," according to Charles Fergus's excellent *Trees of Pennsylvania and the Northeast*, refers "to a Middle Eastern shrub from which myrrh, an ingredient in perfume and incense, is obtained." Because myrrh was one of the three treasures brought to the Christ child by the Three Wise Men, balsam is an appropriate name for this popular Christmas tree.

This Christmas, once again, our whole family will be together. Instead of what used to be a family of five, there will be nine — two daughters-in-law and two granddaughters have joined us. Both granddaughters, 10-month-old Elanor and almost 10-year-old Eva, will accompany us to the tree farm to help us choose the absolute best Christmas tree possible. □

Correction: In Marcia's October column, due to an editorial mistake, Doug Gross was incorrectly mentioned as being a former Game Commission ornithologist. Actually, Doug, we're happy to report, is a Game Commission biologist. He was, formerly, for about 12 years Chairman of the Ornithological Technical Committee, the bird committee of the PA Biological Survey.

Fun Game — By Connie Mertz

Dial 235-Pines

Copy the letter in the space before each description of pine tree, and then finish the statement below.

Number of Needles to a Cluster	Name of Pine
____ 2 short-twisted needles	B larch
____ 2 long needles	R pitch
____ 3 stiff needles	U white
____ 5 soft needles	C red
____ 10 or more short needles, but not evergreen	S Virginia

Another name for Virginia pine is ____ ____ ____ ____ ____.

Bonus: What is the only cone-bearing tree that loses its needles in autumn? It's sometimes called tamarack.

____ ____ ____ ____ ____

answers on p. 62

Straight from the Bowstring
By Tom Tatum

The weather's cold, but you still have deer tags and a freezer to fill. It can be tough this time of year, but all's not lost. Here's some . . .

Strategies for Winter Whitetails

BABY IT'S COLD outside! But it's the late bow season and you still have tags to fill. Matching wits with wily whitetails during the regular bow season is tough enough. Outwitting a deer while combating all those wintry elements that Mother Nature might throw at you during our late archery season — now there's a challenge.

And I have it on good authority (my own) that you can't outwit the former until you overcome the latter.

That self-endowed authority is a factor of my experience, and one experience in particular. It happened at a time when my bowhunting learning curve was about to take a sharp turn — somewhere around the late 1970s, back in the day when the Game Commission granted a single deer tag, which archers could use on either a buck or a doe. That year I had failed in my regular season archery efforts, and then found myself thoroughly skunked throughout the regular firearms season that followed.

Quite frankly, finding my one and only deer tag unfilled at the close of our regular seasons was unfamiliar territory for me. So, when late bow season opened after Christmas, I was fervently resolved to fill my tag and stock the freezer with a fresh supply of venison. Unfortunately, my preparedness for this cold-weather task was as anemic as my youthful determination was rabid. I was destined to learn a lot from the mistakes I would make on one fateful hunting foray that memorable late season.



Youthful enthusiasm is no substitute for the wisdom of experience — a bowhunting fact of life starkly reinforced on that cold, dark, late December day when my wife Patti accompanied me to my traditional

Fulton County deer-hunting haunt. The 3-hour drive from Chester County was followed by an hour pre-dawn climb up the mountainside, as we negotiated the snow-crusted, ice-slicked terrain. By the time we arrived at our destination we were tired and sweaty.

At the crest of the highest ridge, I scrambled up the trunk of a familiar fallen beech tree that provided a natural elevated stand about 10 feet high. Patti, who wasn't hunting that day, hunkered down on the ground below me, encased in an oversized parka. I also wore a thick complement of bulky winter clothing. I nocked an arrow, hung my bow from a nearby branch and waited.

This hunt had all seemed like such a great idea when I first envisioned it in the warmth of a cozy living room, but my vision hadn't included single digit temperatures and a slicing, unrelenting wind chill. Before the first hour had passed I began to experience some serious shivering episodes, despite having changed my perspiration soaked shirt for a dry one. Nonetheless, I was committed to toughing it out at least until noon. A few more episodes of cold chills and shakes and my resolve began to wither like last spring's bouquet. Two other factors exacerbated the problem: In an attempt to travel light, we hadn't packed any food, and in our haste to get to the mountain, we skipped breakfast — unless you count two cups of coffee. The fact that I was perched uncomfortably in a natural fork of the fallen beech required me to shift and fidget, constantly expending energy just to maintain a precarious balance.



Finally, some two hours after I ascended to my stand position, the sound of hooves crackling over the icy sheen of snow just beyond the ridge reached my wind-scraped ears. In a few moments a string of deer — all bald — arched over the ridge top at a crisp pace. They streamed toward me, cutting a crusty, crunchy wake of snow behind them.

As they passed a mere 15 yards from our position, I attempted to turn and draw my bow. Perhaps you've heard the expression "frozen solid." When I first heard the deer, I reached for my bow, gripped it in my gloved hand, and wrapped my fingertips around the string. As the deer paraded by me, I got ready for the shot. But then, as I attempted to pull the string, I failed to draw the bow. Despite my best efforts to pull back the string of my recurve (a Bear Kodiak Magnum model) I couldn't budge it more than an inch. My ability to draw and shoot had been compromised by the freezing cold, coupled with my total lack of recent practice. The deer instantly detected the awkward motion that I finally managed. The herd exploded down the mountainside in a flurry of white flags.

I sighed in disgust, prompting Patti to look up at me with a puzzled expression on her face. I was so cold and stiff it took a very measured and deliberate effort just to climb safely back to the ground. I had been on stand for barely two hours, but now had enough sense to realize that this day's hunt was over.

I didn't come close to killing a deer that morning, and my tag would remain unfilled

SNOW can be a hunter's best friend, not only for tracking, but also as an indication of when and how many deer are frequenting an area.

that year, but I learned some valuable lessons that day and throughout the intervening three decades. Lessons that have taught me a lot about the strategies that need to be applied when cold weather hunting for whitetails.



Lesson Number 1

Clothes and comfort. When the mercury drops below freezing (the rule rather than the exception in most parts of our state during the late season) comfort is paramount to a successful bowhunt. A hunter worn down by the weather is a hunter destined to make mistakes. This translates into wearing clothes that keep you warm and dry. Best bet is the layered approach, starting with thermal underwear. In today's competitive market, you have many modern wardrobe choices, in both synthetic and natural materials, that will help keep you warm and dry.

One example of this is soft wool thermals from companies such as Justin Charles that help wick any moisture away from the body. Modern synthetics like the popular and lightweight Gore-Tex fabrics can be found in every type of hunting apparel from coats and pants to gloves and boots. Keeping your head and ears covered — sources of escaping body heat — is most critical. Also, make sure that the cuffs of shirtsleeves are fastened in airtight fashion to gloves and that pants cuffs are tightened around boot tops. Some coats and pants come with built-in Velcro straps for this purpose. If not, duct tape also works well. Rubber boots keep scent in and dampness out.

Lesson Number 2

Scouting and practice. Deer patterns change with the season and with the weather. Don't expect to find those deer in the same places where they were in October, when food was plentiful and hunting pressure was light. Use that holiday vacation time to get into the woods and look for sign — a simple task in areas with ample snow cover. Also use some of that vacation time to reacquaint yourself with archery tackle you may not have picked up for six weeks or more. And, of course, practice while wearing your winter wardrobe — otherwise you may be in for a nasty surprise, courtesy of that billowy sleeve or bulky glove.

Lesson Number 3

Stand placement. Once you've located crossings, trails and winter feeding and bedding areas, it's time to place the treestand. A local hunter I know has had great success on late season bucks. He points out that, given the complete lack of foliage in the December forest, late season deer hunters are much more likely to be spotted by wary deer that have been educated about hunters throughout the regular seasons. To overcome this, he determines the deer's preferred direction on a given trail (easily determined by tracks) and then sets up his stand on the opposite side of the tree from which the deer is expected to approach. Although this set-up requires constant over-the-shoulder glances to spot approaching deer, it also keeps the hunter hidden from the deer's eyes and ultimately should provide the hunter with a decent quartering away shot once the deer passes the stand.

To this I would add that, at least for

hunters without a fear of heights and within reason, that stand placement should be slightly higher than might be preferred in the regular season. An additional few feet may make the difference in keeping an exposed or moving hunter above the sightline of a late season buck. Another factor in late-season stand placement is wind — you want to stay out of it whenever possible. On that ill-fated hunt decades ago, I learned the hard way about the bone jarring wind-chill offered by ridge top stands. Set up in a sheltered hollow or on a side hill, and you'll stay warmer and hunt longer.

Lesson Number 4

Incidentals. Anything that can keep you more comfortable helps give you a sharper edge for longer periods of time. A hot thermos of coffee or hot chocolate can be nursed for more than an hour. Energy bars, chocolate or even apples and bananas also offer nutrition and refreshment. Another addition to your daypack should be a few chemical foot and hand warmers, such as those made by HeatMax, which can provide heat to vulnerable extremities for six to ten hours. Something else that you might consider is a device to enhance your hearing. On a frigid cold day, your ears will be covered. While this preserves body heat, it also compromises your ability to detect moving deer. A hearing enhancement device, such as a Walker Game Ear, helps counter this problem. On a bright, snow-covered winter's morning, sun glare can become a real problem, quickly fatiguing a hunter's constantly scanning eyes. Carry a good pair of polarized sunglasses to address this.

Lesson Number 5

Dealing with snow. Other than the frigid temperatures, the most distinctive characteristic of the late season in most parts of Penn's Woods is snow cover. With few exceptions, snow is the bowhunter's friend. It makes it a simple task to pattern, find, see, track, trail and drag deer. Keep in mind that the type of snow you encounter should influence your hunting strategy. If you find an ice-encrusted snow that crackles underfoot, take a stand. The deer will hear you coming a mile away — but if you stay put you'll be the one doing the hearing. If you find a soft, powdery snow, the opposite is true. You'll be able to still-hunt and stalk soundlessly. Windy days that rattle tree branches will also help mask the sounds of your movements. If the snow is fresh enough, tracking can be an effective strategy.

Lesson Number 6

And possibly the most important lesson of all — always use common sense. If the mercury is below zero, the wind is howling, and/or a heavy snow is falling, turn off the alarm clock and go back to sleep. These are the kinds of days they make video hunting games for — and you won't be exposed to hypothermia on a virtual deer hunt. Also, keep in mind that a snowfall or freezing rain the night before your hunt can transform a treestand into a slippery deathtrap. Always have a plan B that keeps you hunting on the ground. Also, carry a cell phone or walkie-talkie in case of an unforeseen and unfortunate turn of events while out in the winter whitetail woods.

Last season, more than 30 years after the late season fiasco described at the opening of this column, I again found myself with an unfilled buck tag (and an unfilled antlerless permit or two) heading into our post-Christmas archery season. Over the years, I had filled a few antlerless tags with my bow in the late season, but I'd still never killed a buck. Then, on December 29, 2004, hunting from a treestand overlooking a familiar local woodlot, I arrowed a wide, broken-racked 6-point. Meeting the challenge of filling my buck tag in the late archery season (for the first time ever) provided a special satisfaction I'd never experienced before. When I recovered the buck after a short tracking chore a thought occurred to me: It pays to learn from your own mistakes. Better yet, maybe you'll learn from mine. □

By Dave Ehrig

Which muzzleloader bullet is best for deer hunting? The simple answer is the one that you can shoot with accuracy and lethality. The complexity of bullet choice relates to the type of rifle (primitive or modern), barrel length, rate of rifling twist, depth of grooves, powder type, volume of powder, and the distance you typically shoot. There is no simple answer, just lots of choices.

The Accurate Round Ball and Conical Bullets

IF YOU'VE started muzzleloader hunting within the last 10 years, you probbly own an inline percussion rifle, and can't understand why anybody would want to use a flintlock or traditional percussion rifle. You, no doubt, have been fed a lot of advertising, suggesting you load three 50-grain pellets and one copper-jacketed, plastic sabotted bullet. With this load, you've been told, you can kill any game in North America.

But what if that load became increasingly difficult to sight in? What if squeezing the trigger brought painful recoil and a flinch? And, what if you missed deer because the system was flawed? On top of that, your well-meaning buddies, who have been shooting muzzleloaders since the '70s, are badgering you to go primitive. What should you do?

First, take a deep breath and remind yourself that muzzleloading is not a magic science. What you need to remember is the simple ballistics. The three variables in bullet drop to the target are distance, velocity and deceleration (the rate at which the bullet speed decreases and falls.) In other words, the longer a bullet falls, the faster it drops. As shooters, we can make sure that the bullets travel in pretty much a straight line while they are dropping. If we don't, the bullet with the best ballistic coefficient in the world may never hit its mark. Accuracy makes a lethal load,



ROUNDBALLS have the lightest bullet weights per caliber, which gives them the fastest muzzle velocities per volume of powder. They're accurate, too.



MUZZLELOADERS have many bullet choices, from patched roundballs to modern sabotted bullets.

not ballistics.

So how do I get an accurate bullet? Consider that it must be accelerated uniformly out of the barrel each shot. That means using a consistent powder charge that brings about small group sizes, while ensuring enough velocity for the bullet to cause maximum tissue destruction and penetration. This usually happens above 900 fps for soft lead bullets and 1,200 fps for jacketed bullets. Accelerate the bullet too fast and it may become unstable, like a curve ball thrown by a pitcher. Accelerate the bullet too slow and bullet drop becomes a major nemesis.

The choice of bullet has a profound effect on accuracy. For those who hunt with a traditional roundball system (powder, patch and ball), the following information may only confirm what you've already suspected. A 45-caliber flintlock with a 26-inch barrel can be loaded with a patched roundball (a .440 roundball weighs 127 grains) and 70 grains of FFFg black powder to produce a muzzle velocity close to 1,900 fps. This load generates about 1,000 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle, twice the suggested minimum energy needed for a whitetail. But a roundball sheds energy quickly. In just 50 yards, this load will lose half its energy, leaving a hunter with about 536 foot-pounds of energy. This is awfully close to the minimum needed, but consider that it is still more energy than that of some magnum handgun loads that are often recommended for deer hunting. The 45-caliber's higher velocity, compared to other calibers, makes it the fastest and flattest shooting of all the flintlock calibers that are legal for deer in Pennsylvania. It's an accurate caliber and its smaller barrel diameter allows it to be a lighter rifle.

Most flintlock rifles are designed for shooting roundballs, but some are designed to handle the conical lead, copper, jacketed and plastic sabotted bullets. These bullets carry more energy downrange than the roundball, but increased energy comes at a cost of more recoil. A rifling rate greater than 1:48 stabilizes roundballs, but 1:48 does not adequately stabilize a slug. Because accurate bullet placement anchors whitetails, not misplaced energy, be careful of your barrel's rifling twist rate. If your choice of bullet is a conical, look at companies that advertise barrel rifling with 1:30 to 1:20 rotations, but be prepared to accept the slower velocities and heavier recoil generated by using the heavier conical slugs.

Velocity is important. The slower the bullet, the less hydrostatic shock that's delivered, and a smaller wound channel. In other words, even though the cylindrical bullet has more retained energy, it may not be as accurate or kill as quickly as a roundball in a slow-twist barrel.

When a 50-caliber is loaded with 90 grains of FFFg or 100 grains of FFg black powder (there is about a 10 percent increase in velocity when using the smaller FFFg granulation size, but the larger FFg produces safer lower breech pressures, especially with the heavier conical bullets), the 180-grain roundball produces a muzzle velocity close to 1,800 fps, with about 1,300 foot-pounds of energy. This is a significant leap in energy over the 45-caliber. It will give the open woods hunter a distinct lethal range advantage. In fact, the gun's roundball lethality carries all the way out to 80 yards. Perhaps that is why the .50 has become the nation's favorite

caliber, and one that I would recommend for all hunters new to this sport.

Can conical lead bullets work in older guns, such as side hammer percussions and flintlocks? The answer is yes, maybe, and no. Remember, at distances less than 50 yards, any kind of bullet will work. It's at longer distances that gravity and air resistance begin to play tricks with accuracy. The main consideration for shooting long slugs of lead, regardless of whether they are sheathed in plastic or not, is rotation.

Most flintlocks and many side hammer percussions have barrel rifling with twist rates of one turn in 48 inches or slower. This is great bullet rotation for roundballs shot with velocities exceeding 1,600 fps, but not longer bullets. Because most sabotted bullets weigh more than their counterpart roundballs of the same caliber, they will not achieve the higher velocities in these older guns, unless the powder charges are increased dramatically, which isn't a safe idea.

Because big bore slugs are slower and heavier than roundballs, there will be a profound effect on sighting in if you are used to shooting roundballs. What will lead slugs do for muzzleloaders? First, the heavier mass of the lead conical will have a reduced velocity. If 80 grains of FFg black powder shoved the roundball out the barrel at 1,800 feet per second, the 300-plus grains of a lead slug will reduce the velocity by 300 fps. This translates into a lower point of target impact. In other words, resight your rifle if you intend to bring home venison.

Second, slugs will carry more foot-pounds of ballistic energy than their sphere-shaped cousins, and do so farther downrange than roundballs. Lead slugs are marketed under names such as Hornady Great Plains Bullets, Buffalo Bullets, T/C Maxi-Hunter, T/C Maxi-Ball, Buffalo Ball-ets, CVA Buckslayer and Colorado Conicals. What they all have in common is increased weight, greater sectional density and better ballistic coefficient. The increased bullet weight over the roundball, though, increases felt recoil, results in slower velocities, and conicals cost more. They do, however, carry awesome game-stopping power. While they coat the bore with lead, this can be managed with a good lead removing bore solvent. The bottom line is that they do have the ability to carry energy more efficiently downrange.

Third, slugs penetrate better than roundballs, because they have greater sectional density. This is a result of their greater weight in relationship to their diameter. This allows the various types of slugs to retain their velocity better than roundballs. Their ballistic coefficient is higher because of the ratio between their sectional density and their shape. In other words, their pointed noses are aerodynamically more slippery. Not only does the same caliber slug come in different nose configurations, they are available in different weights. They have different bearing surfaces against the grooves of the rifling (some designed as lubrication grooves), and even their gas-sealing bases are different.

Velocities for slugs are much slower than roundballs at the muzzle, and they, too, will shed nearly one third of their velocity at the 100-yard mark, but their retained en-



IN-LINE percussion rifle barrels have faster rates of twist designed specifically for the longer and heavier sabotted bullets.

A QUICK second shot depends on loading resistance in a fouled bore. Hunters need to be careful that the bullet doesn't move off the powder charge when the gun is aimed downhill.



ergy is better due to their greater mass. Unfortunately, your shoulder will tell you that you launched a missile heavier than a roundball.

You must take more care to seat the lead conical on the powder, as well as checking its position from time to time as you hunt. Lead slugs have a tendency to jar loose from their seated position. If airspace develops, an accident could occur, possibly even a burst barrel. Detonation occurs when powder burns, is pushed forward from the breech into the airspace created by the slug that has slid forward of the powder, and then the powder detonates at the base of the projectile.

Flintlock rifles normally lack the fast rate of rifling twist to shoot slugs well. Dixie Gun Works' American Jaeger, is one exception, though, and solves this with a 1:28 rifling twist in their pre-Revolutionary War style German hunter's rifle. No doubt, other manufacturers will soon follow their lead.

In the 1990s, Del Ramsay of Arkansas introduced a radically new idea. He began placing jacketed pistol bullets into a larger shoe (sabot is a French word for shoe or sheath) of plastic. The age of the sabot had arrived. Sabots are found in many different styles. Thompson/Center Break-O-Way sabots split into two pieces, releasing the bullet, while most others have "petals," that open to allow the bullet's release. Names such as Hornady XTP, Nosler Partition Sabots and S.H.O.T.S., MML Sabots, Swift A-Frame Sabots, Silver Lightning Sabots, Barnes MZ Sabots, Harvester Sabertooth and Scorpion, as well as Precision Extremes HPBT, give muzzleloaders a wide variety to choose from.

Most sabotted bullets are 44- and 45-caliber pistol bullets that have been "plastic-wrapped" so they fit tightly into the 50- and 54-caliber bores. The bullets possess a smaller diameter, have a better BC and sectional density than roundballs, but their 250- to 500-grain bullet weights are deceiving. They are much heavier than the same caliber roundball, and hence, slower in velocity with an equal volume of powder. But, when shooting at really big game, or game animals beyond 100 yards, their retained energy is far more impressive than the roundball.

Plastic sabots do not like the deeper rifling found on roundball barrels. This is due to the exploding gasses bypassing the bullet by going around and through the deep grooves of a roundball barrel's rifling. The inconsistent pressures generated by the bypassing gases lead to inaccuracy. That is why you need a shallow-grooved, fast twist rifling to shoot sabotted bullets effectively.

You will need to experiment with different types of bullet weights, sabot types and nose configurations until you find one that works well with your gun. But remember, the soft plastic sabots do laminate the lands of your rifling, which will affect ease of loading, as well as accuracy. To keep the

plastic lamination to a minimum, strong plastic solvents and a bronze bore brush will be necessary.

This lamination problem brought about a third group of muzzleloading slugs, the plastic gas check slugs. Gunsmiths found that the higher pressures generated by smokeless powders would sometimes blow gases by the soft lead at the slug's base. To guarantee consistent velocities, copper would be mated to the base of the lead bullet to more tightly seal the grooves of the rifling. Today, a plastic gas check is attached to the bullet's base. This gives the advantage of sealing the blow-by of gases, ease of loading, and accuracy of a lead bullet, while reducing the amount of plastic laminate on the lands of the rifling.

Bullets such as the CVA PowerBelt, Copper Magnum bullets, Harvester Saber Tooth and Black Belt bullets have plastic gas checks at their bases, but because they do not run a plastic bearing surface between the bullet and the bore, they are not considered sabots and are less prone to laminating the barrel.

A thorough understanding of modern muzzleloading bullets would not be complete without mentioning bullet performance on deer-sized game. Bullet performance is a result of several variables, namely: velocity, mass and the ability to expand (mushroom). Slow velocity is no friend of muzzleloading bullets. Velocities below 900 fps are too slow for roundballs. Velocities under 1,200 fps for jacketed bullets are too slow for the bullet to generate enough energy to expand and penetrate. Because higher velocities are desirable, consider that they have a direct relationship to the amount of powder needed to accelerate the increased bullet weight.

Why then did the jacketed bullet come into existence? When lead slugs were accelerated to velocities equal to roundballs, their increased velocities caused considerable lead laminating in rifle bores. Any round that exceeded 2,000 fps suffered reduced accuracy in succeeding shots. To remedy this, gunsmiths began to place lead cores in copper jackets. The copper didn't affect the steel bore as much as other metals, but it did bring a new problem to the hunt. Copper jackets retard the mushrooming effect of lead diameters when they impact on a deer, which results in decreased shocking power.

Through experimentation, bullet manufacturers began to offer hunters a myriad bullet designs that would mushroom with tremendous shocking power, just like the lowly, soft-lead roundball does. But, the copper jacket was preventing that from happening, so bullet designers began to soften the jacket at the nose, as well as adding a hollow-pointed cavity in the bullet's nose to promote expansion.

The advent of copper solids, albeit hollow-pointed and petaled, introduced another consideration into the metallurgy mix. Lead has been the traditional bullet metal, but iron, tin, nickel, tungsten, bismuth and other metals have been tried. Is there something new and improved on the horizon? Perhaps, but there is a real problem with bullet expansion and penetration with anything other than lead.

For recoil-shy hunters, the soft push of a roundball load has an advantage in accurate shooting, but with the advent of slugs, recoil needs to be considered and addressed by stock designs and recoil pads.

While slow velocity is no friend to muzzleloading bullet performance, hypervelocity isn't either. If you are loading 150 grains of powder (three 50-grain pellets), you may find that you're not achieving optimum accuracy.

What you are doing is beating up your face and shoulder, and slamming a lot of plastic into the bore's rifling. Most experienced shooters agree that 150 grains of powder is way too much for your whitetail gun. Back off to 100 grains and enjoy the accuracy and lethality of your load, and you will be a far more effective shooter and hunter. □

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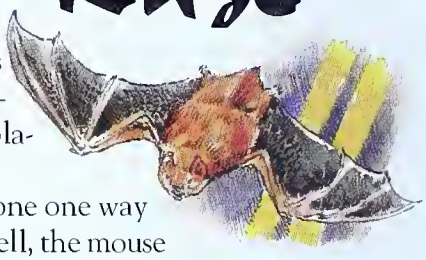
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Road Rage

IT WAS LATE and I was tired, but I knew I had to keep watching the margins of the road for the glimmer of eyeshine, for the pale outline of a deer that could bolt across the mountain road. But as carefully as I watched, I didn't see the small shape until it was too late, the skittering movement of fear and uncertainty that was right in front of me. A mouse, blinded by the high beams, ran in frantic and aimless circles like a drop of water dancing on a hot skillet — and I, on a narrow road with no time to correct the implacable momentum of the car, flew right over it.



I don't know if I hit the mouse; and nothing to be done one way or the other anyway. I kept driving, and the mouse — well, the mouse either blessed its luck and kept running, or would feed a hungry raccoon by daybreak.

How often does that happen, every night of the year, across the more than 120,000 miles of road that lace Pennsylvania? How many lives, from the biggest deer and elk to the smallest insects, are snuffed out by cars? The toll must be staggering, but most of us are too inured to the carnage to notice the piles of feathers or fur.

A friend of mine, Tom, often works the night shift and comes home late along the same few miles of a rural Lebanon County road. Two years ago, quite by accident, he noticed a dead bat. Then another. They were red bats, lovely critters with thick, brick-orange fur that migrate through the state each spring and fall, and a species all but unknown to most people. Tom began driving more slowly, his eyes open. He began going out three or four mornings a week, and what he found, I think, was horrific.

In an 18-month period, from July 2003 to December 2004, he tallied an astounding 79 dead bats on that 5-mile stretch of road. Only six were little brown or big brown bats, probably the two most common species in Pennsylvania. Nine were long-eared bats, while 66 were red bats, which is a number even bat researchers who reviewed Tom's results found flabbergasting.

By this past summer, after two years of watching, his total was up to 103 bats of five species, but bats were only part of it. Tom's roadkill survey turned up 21 species of birds, ranging from wood thrushes to saw-whet owls to a turkey vulture; 16 species of mammals (among them jumping mice, mink, long-tailed weasels and a flying squirrel, along with the expected deer, opossums and raccoons); and 16 species of reptiles and amphibians, including 11 box turtles and 15 spotted salamanders, the latter trying to reach their breeding pools.

Did my friend simply happen on an especially deadly stretch of road? Perhaps so, at least for bats — such a level of vehicular mortality is all but unknown away from big colonies. But then, who bothers to look so patiently and carefully? There may be many roads like this one, culling wildlife in an equally harsh, wasteful harvest.

Pennsylvania already has more miles of road, per square mile of rural land, than any other state in the nation — and our political leaders seem bent on filling up the empty spaces on the map with still more. More convenience, of course — but at what price for wildlife and, ultimately, for us as well?

Scott Weidensaul


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